



CLARENTINE.

A N O V E L.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



L O N D O N :

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1796.

CLARENTINE.

CHAPTER XV.

CLARENTINE hearing at the door, when she returned home, that Captain Somerset was already gone, immediately went into the parlour publicly to announce — wishing to avoid any private conversation with Mr. Lenham upon the subject — her new plan.

The surprize with which she was heard by every body, but particularly the anxious and stedfast look with which, whilst blushing and speaking very quick, she was surveyed the whole time by Mr. Lenham, embarrassed her extremely. She answered all their questions with the most tremulous agitation; seemed even afraid of raising her eyes, and fought with so much eagerness, but so little art, to

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change the conversation, that not only her venerable guardian, but Miss Barclay, who sat attentively examining her, was likewise filled with suspicion and amazement.

Her mother, however, neither so deeply interested as the one, or so distrustful as the other, spoke of the scheme, after her first unmeaning wonder was over, with her accustomed facetious unconcern.

“ *Good wits jump*, I’ve heard say,” cried she; “ it was but this very afternoon Captain Somerset talked of going a journey too : not so long a one though as yours, Miss Clary.”

Clarentine, who could not, now, hear the mere name of Somerset without confusion, trusted not her voice to make any enquiries, but in her own despite felt extremely anxious to learn whither, and for what purpose he was going. Mrs. Barclay went on—

“ He’s obliged, he says, to set out for Windsor to-morrow, and doesn’t think he can be back in less than a week : so that, what with the loss of Mr. Eltham
you

your journey, Mrs. Denbigh's, and his, we shall be left here quite solitary."

"O, Miss Delmington has been in such *charming* spirits lately," cried Miss Barclay, ironically, "that we shall certainly be terribly dull without her!"

"I am not conscious," said Clarentine, vexed at this speech, and unusually eager to defend herself, "that I have been at all in worse spirits of late than common."

"No!" exclaimed Miss Barclay—"Why, Lord, you have looked, as my mother says, so like a *poor ba'polb of syrup* for above a month, that I could almost—

Clarentine, dreadfully afraid she would to her, as well as to Eltham, coarsely blunder out some rude insinuation concerning her being *in love*, now hastily interrupted her, and with a forced smile, said—

"If I really *was* low-spirited, Miss Barclay, nothing would be so little likely to cure me as animadverting upon it."

"No, to be sure," cried the mother, "it only makes bad worse. For my part, when I've got the *blue devils*, I had as

lief any body should beat me, as take notice of it."

The conversation then, to Clarentine's great relief, took a different turn, and nothing further was said concerning her journey that night.

Infinitely as her reason, and still more her pride, taught her to rejoice at her approaching departure, her heart, as the time drew near, sunk at the prospect of thus voluntarily banishing herself from Somerset.

"Ah! little did I imagine," cried she, "a few weeks since, that a separation like this, could ever have been planned and fought by *me*! My whole soul recoils at the idea even now: and to go thus suddenly, thus coldly too—quit the place whilst he is absent—take no leave of him! Good Heaven, is it *I* that can do all this? Is it *Somerset* I can thus part from?—Cruel, cruel Mrs. Hertford!—Why do you compel me to such a task?—But for you I might still have remained here—still at times even have conversed with and heard him, as in former days, call me his *dear*, his *gentle* Clarentine!—*His* Clarentine?

rentine?—Oh, never, never shall I be his!”—

It was on the night preceding her journey, that whilst, unfitted for general conversation, she was shut up in her own apartment, indulging these melancholy reflections, some one, who by the gentleness of the sound she concluded to be Mr. Lenham, knocked unexpectedly at her door. She immediately arose from before the fire opposite which she had been sitting, and trying to assume a look of serenity, if not of cheerfulness, moved to the door, and opening it, was beginning, “My dear Sir, is it”—but drawing back the next minute, with an air of affright and consternation, walked hastily again to the chimney, followed by—Somerset.

Both, during a short, but to Clarentine most embarrassing interval, stood utterly silent. At length, Somerset, having shut the door, once more approached her, and with a look of hurry and anxiety said—

“Am I, Miss Delmington, to believe the strange report I have just heard?—Are you, indeed, going from Hampstead?”

Clarentine, supporting herself with one hand against the table, and trembling as much from surprize at his unexpected appearance, as from confusion at the almost reproachful seriousness of his enquiry, answered in a low voice—"Yes, Sir."

"And did you mean, is it possible you could mean thus abruptly to set out without leaving one line to explain to me the motives of your departure—or, at least, to tell me when I might flatter myself you would return?"—

Clarentine, dreadfully abashed, hung her head, and with difficulty repressed her tears, but attempted not to answer him.

"To speak of times *past*," resumed Somerset, after vainly waiting some minutes for a reply, "changed as they are, would to me be too painful; else would I ask Miss Delmington, whether the design she had *now* meditated, would *then* have appeared to her generous and friendly?—We quit not even a casual acquaintance without *some* preparation, some previous information of our intention:—yet your brother, your friend, your Somerset you could quit, and not even deign, con-
cerned

cerned and amazed as you knew he must be on hearing of your departure, to leave him a verbal farewell!"

"Oh Heaven!" exclaimed Clarentine, overcome by this severe but just reproof, and throwing herself in a chair—"say no more, Mr. Somerset, I conjure you!—I am sorry—I am ashamed—I meant not—

She could proceed no further, but bursting into tears, started up, and ran with precipitation into the adjoining room.

Her absence, however; was but of short duration: the instant she was alone, reproaching herself for having flown him so inconsiderately, she endeavoured to command her feelings, and return to him again with an apology somewhat more distinct, and a countenance somewhat more composed.

Almost hopeless of her granting him such an indulgence, Somerset, who, shocked and afflicted at the emotion he had caused, stood in an attitude of thoughtfulness and depression near the fire, hastily advanced to meet her as she entered, and in a softened voice, said—

"Can you forgive me, my dearest Miss Delmington, tell me, can you pardon the

unlicenced freedom with which I permitted myself to address you?—I am grieved, you know not how deeply grieved, to have occasioned you one moment's uneasiness."

Clarentine required not this gentleness in order to feel pacified and appeased. Fully sensible how deservedly she must have appeared to merit his reproaches, they had not awakened in her mind one resentful thought, or excited in her any sentiments but of shame and regret. She therefore very readily accorded the pardon that was so humbly solicited, and then almost as humbly pleaded for her own.

"Oh!" cried Somerset, with earnestness, "speak not such a word, I beseech you; let the forgiveness be as wholly yours as the offence was mine."

Then drawing a chair next her, after she had again taken her seat, he added—

"I have but one apology to offer, Miss Delmington, for the force of the expressions I so much lament having used. The suddenness with which the intelligence of your intended journey was announced to me threw me off my guard, and bereft me of all reflection: my heart

was,

was full, I scarce knew what I said—and might have proceeded yet longer in the same strain, had not the tears I with so much cruelty drew from you, checked and recovered me to a sense of the impropriety I was committing.”

“ Well, well,” said Clarentine, faintly smiling, “ the storm is now blown over, and we will think of it no more.”

“ Ah, believe me,” cried he, “ I shall not the sooner cease to think of it with self-reproach for this unmerited gentleness and mercy !”

They were then for some time both silent. Clarentine, however, affecting a gaiety she did not feel, at length said—

“ *Your anger being past, Mr. Somerset, it is now my turn to reprove. Why, if we ought not even to quit a casual acquaintance without some preparation, did you set off so suddenly to Windsor, and leave me to hear of it only by accident ?*”

“ Ah, dearest Miss Delmington,” replied Somerset, in a tone of dejection,—
“ I had not the vanity to suppose *my* absence could be to you any other than a matter of utter insignificance : the case, with regard to what I felt for *your* depar-

ture, is different: I never did, nor ever *wish* to conceal, that in every thing which relates to you, I take the liveliest and most fervent interest!"

"Is it possible," thought Clarentine, extremely affected by this speech, "he could thus seriously reproach me for my indifference if he *knew* or *believed* I love him?" This doubt gave her courage to look up, and with a sweetness and sensibility to which he had long been refused, she said—

"Why, Mr. Somersct, will you talk to me thus?—Why believe me so unjust and ungrateful? Have I ever given you reason to suspect I really felt so little esteem and regard for you, as not to be sensibly hurt by any thing that on your part bore the appearance of slight or neglect?"

The wonder, doubt, and joy this speech occasioned Somersct, held him some minutes speechless and immovable. At length, however, recovering his voice, and eagerly snatching her hand, he pressed it with a look of gratitude and transport to his lips, and earnestly exclaimed—

“ Ever dear, ever lovely and generous Clarentine ! what relief to my heart has not this kindness—this unhopèd-for kindness given !—Oh, tell me,” added he, after a short pause—“ tell me—why should you undertake this hateful journey ?—Why must I, the first moment you have restored yourself to me again, and for so long, lose you ?”

Clarentine, surprized, yet involuntarily softened by this tenderness, sighed deeply, but made no answer, and Somerset still detaining her hand, which indeed she had not courage to attempt drawing from him, thus went on—

“ Could I divine, my beloved Clarentine, what passes in that gentle bosom, and penetrate its secret sorrows, with what earnest anxiety would I endeavour to alleviate them ! You acknowledge,” added he, “ some regard, some esteem for me, but when, when will those sentiments animate again into confidence and affection ? You cannot have a grief in which, mysterious as you are, I do not participate ; say then, sweetest Clarentine ! tell me why that bitter sigh and these involuntary tears ?”

Clarentine had no time, even if she had had words to answer him, for just then the voice of young Blandford was heard at the door, calling out—"Captain Somerset, Mrs. Hertford is below, and wants to speak with you."

All Clarentine's late pride of heart returned at these words; all that softness into which his own footherings and gentleness had melted her, disappeared, and snatching her hand abruptly from him, with glowing cheeks, and a look of haste and trepidation, she said—"Oh, go, go, Mr. Somerset! Why did you stay so long? Why suffer *me* to detain you?"

And then, without raising her eyes to his, or giving him time to stop her, with yet more speed than before, she rushed out of the closet into her own room, and locked the door after her.

In a few minutes she heard him, though slowly, go down stairs, after which all was silent, except that, at intervals, she fancied she could distinguish the murmur of voices in the parlour, as the maid (for it was now near supper-time) opened the door and passed backwards and forwards; what was said, however, it was impossible

to

to discover, nor would her agitation have allowed her to listen even had she wished it. Disturbed and restless, she traversed her room with uneasy steps, sometimes softening at the recollection of Somerset's late kindness; at others, indignantly shrinking either from the idea of sharing his divided heart with Mrs. Hertford, or being made solely the dupe of his dissimbled affection.

That he wished her to believe he loved her, she could have no doubt; yet when she reflected upon his marked attention to another woman the whole time; upon the sort of public influence and power that woman seemed authorised to exercise over him; how to reconcile such a wish to his accustomed high sense of honour, she knew not. "Was it *pity* only, he designed to shew me?" cried she—"or does he mean all these warm professions to pass merely for the effusions of *brotherly fondness*?—Why does his conduct so strangely militate against his language? and why, when his looks are all tenderness, are his actions all duplicity? Is there either recititude or principle in seeking to conciliate my affection after his own is gone? Oh Somerset—

Somerfet, when shall I ever understand your inexplicable character! when know whether with justice to bestow upon you contempt or esteem!"

Whilst these thoughts were darting in rapid succession through her mind, the parlour door was again opened, and she heard Mrs. Hertford's voice in the passage. Desirous of assuring herself whether she was really going, Clarentine went back to her closet, and the moon being by this time risen, presently saw her attended by Somerfet, who walked by her side, and her own servant who followed her at some distance, cross the little court before the house, and when she reached the gate that opened to the road, stop at it during a considerable interval, in apparently earnest conversation.

Clarentine's heart beat quick at this sight, and as if rooted to the spot, she stood mournfully observing them, till at length Mrs. Hertford, after shaking hands with Somerfet, walked on with the servant, leaving him to go back alone to the house; this he did immediately, but as he advanced looking up at Clarentine's window, she hastily retreated, and soon
after

after heard him shut the passage door, and return to the parlour.

The maid now came to let her know supper was ready; she declined going down, however, upon pretence she had not yet finished her packing, an excuse that in some measure was true, as she had still all her drawing materials to collect; but desired her to tell Mr. Lenham, that as she was to go very early in the morning, she should be extremely glad to speak to him before he went to bed, either in his study or her own room; Mrs. and Miss Barclay she meant to take leave of after they came up stairs, but Somerset she was determined if possible to avoid seeing again.

Accordingly, when at his usual hour Somerset, despairing of another interview, departed, Mr. Lenham hastened to her. His adieus were affectionate, and even in the present depressed state of her spirits, touching; he carefully forbore, however, speaking upon any subject he thought likely to distress her, or asking one question concerning the motives of her journey; but having remitted to her the quarterly payment that about this time was
near

near becoming due, tenderly embraced and blessed her, and immediately retired.

The Barclays soon after both came to her likewise; *their* parting compliments she found no difficulty in supporting with perfect composure; they were short and blunt, though on the mother's part, at least, by no means unfriendly; and having staid with her a decent time, asked a great number of useless questions, and scarcely attended to one answer, they wished her good night, and walked out with the same unconcerned aspect they had entered.

Early the following morning, Mrs. Denbigh in a hired post-chaise was at the door, and Clarentine getting into it, they immediately proceeded forward, and sleeping one night upon the road, arrived the next evening at Bath.

C H A P. XVIII.

MRS. Denbigh and her fair companion having slept the first night of their arrival at the York Hotel, sallied forth the next morning to secure lodgings as near as they could to the South Parade, where Mrs. Westbury, the friend who Mrs. Denbigh was purposely come to visit, resided. To these they immediately removed, and as soon as their early dinner was over, having previously sent a note to announce their intention, walked to that lady's house.

In the parlour which Clarentine was shewn into, whilst Mrs. Denbigh went up to her friend's room, sat a young man apparently about two-and-twenty years old, lounging back in his chair before the fire with a pamphlet in one hand and a tooth-pick (of which he seemed to be making furious use) in the other. His face and figure when he rose up and looked round, appeared to Clarentine, though both for a man rather finical and diminutive, extremely regular and handsome,
but

but the ridiculous affectation of negligence that accompanied every motion, and the fixed yet vacant stare with which, scarcely condescending to bow as she entered, he surveyed her, at first amazed, and afterwards embarrassed her so much, that, declining the chair which the servant had placed for her near the fire, she walked gravely to the window, and without speaking, stood before it with her back to him, pretending to be engaged in observing what was passing in the street.

This quiet indifference appeared to stimulate the young man's curiosity, and pique his vanity; for in a very short time, kicking away the chair which stood between them in preference to taking the trouble of walking round it, he sauntered up to her with his hands in his coat pockets, and resting one shoulder against the window frame, and half yawning as he spoke, said in a languid, drawling voice—

“Are you come to make any stay in this place, Ma'am?”

Clarentine, infinitely better pleased to enter into any sort of conversation than

to be merely considered as an object to be stared at, very readily answered—

“ I believe, Sir, we shall be here about a month.”

“ You are a relation of Mrs. Denbigh's, I presume, Ma'am?”

“ No, Sir, I have not that happiness.”

“ Have you a very extensive acquaintance at Bath, Ma'am?”

“ I never was here before, Sir.”

“ You come from London I think, Ma'am? Is it not very thin just now?”

“ No, Sir; it appeared to me extremely crowded.”

“ At this time of the year London crowded?—The public places filled?”

“ Oh, as to the public places I know nothing about them, I spoke merely of the streets.”

“ The streets?” repeated the coxcomb, a little contemptuously, “ And did those bright eyes vouchsafe to bestow a glance upon any of the vulgar objects in the streets?”

“ My bright eyes,” replied Clarentine, determined to petrify him at once by the discovery of her insignificance, “ were so nearly upon a level with those objects,

as

as I always was on foot when in London, that sometimes as well as my ears, they were extremely inconvenienced by them."

The gentle youth, as she expected, looked utterly confounded at this disgraceful confession, and for some seconds remained profoundly silent; at length, however, addressing her again, though with yet less ceremony than at first—

"Mrs. Denbigh, I think, Ma'am," said he, "lives in a very confined circle when in town? Do you reside with her?"

"No, Sir; only for the present."

"Your usual residence is in the city then, perhaps?"

Clarentine laughed, but again her only answer was a simple negative: after which, walking very composedly to the fire, and sitting down, she took up the pamphlet he had been reading, and begun turning it over without seeming to recollect he was in the room.

Mrs. Denbigh now in a short time came down, and on seeing the young man, who, with a glass held to his eye, was still lolling against the window, in a friendly and familiar voice, called out—

"Well,

“ Well, John, how do you do?— Your mother has been telling me you have left college and are come to live entirely at home: I am glad to hear it on her account, for confined as she is, it must be a great pleasure to her to have you in the same house ”

John, appearing by no means delighted at the old-fashioned freedom of this address, made a cold bow, but did not speak.

Mrs. Denbigh continued—

“ I hope,” said she, “ sitting down by Clarentine, “ you have entertained this young lady very gallantly during my absence?”

John smiled a little superciliously, and still remained silent.

“ Why, friend,” cried Mrs. Denbigh, surveying him, at length, with some surprise, “ are you grown too fine to speak to an old acquaintance? You look immensely solemn.”

Then turning to Clarentine, who had thrown aside her book and sat internally enjoying poor John's consternation—

“ What do those arch and comic eyes of yours mean?” cried she. “ Have
6 you

you and our young student been falling out?"

"O dear, not at all, madam!" answered Clarentine, unable any longer to refrain laughing. "No two people were ever more peaceable than we have been: I don't think we have spoken one word this last half hour!"

"That's being very peaceable indeed!" said Mrs. Denbigh, drily. "But pray John, how comes all this about? You were wont to be extremely assiduous, *auprès des dames*: is not that any longer the fashion?"

"Dear Ma'am," cried he, fimpering and looking extremely filly, "why ask *me* such a question? Nobody cares less about fashions than I do." Then putting up his glass and moving indolently towards the door, "I'll go and see," added he, "whether my mother is coming down."

"No, don't trouble yourself," cried Mrs. Denbigh, "Miss Delmington and I are to drink tea in her dressing-room, and when she is ready she will send us word."

“ Miss

“ Miss Delmington!” repeated the young man, with a look of surprize, “ is that Lady’s name Delmington?”

“ Yes,” replied Mrs. Denbigh, “ did you ever hear it before?”

“ O, very often; I had the pleasure of being extremely well acquainted at Oxford with a young Baronet of that name—Sir Edgar Delmington. Pray, Ma’am, ’ to Clarentine, “ is he any relation of yours?”

“ Yes, Sir.”

“ Your brother?”

“ No, Sir—my cousin.”

Assuming an air of infinitely more politeness than he had yet worn, (though her *London walks* still *choaked* him a little) he now said—

“ Upon my word, Ma’am, I am extremely happy to have had the honour of seeing you. I hope Sir Edgar is very well?—Is he in town?”

“ He is in Devonshire, I believe, Sir.”

“ How could you suppose,” cried Mrs. Denbigh, “ that an acquaintance of *yours*, Mr. Westbury, a *Baronet*, would disgrace himself (not being in parliament) by
appearing

appearing in London before the birthday?"

Just then, very fortunately, for Mr. Westbury was extremely at a loss what to say, the door opened, and they were all summoned to the dressing-room.

In the mother of this trivial young man, Clarentine found a woman, who, though an habitual valetudinarian, feeble and infirm, was yet pleasing, sensible, and well-bred. She had been the tried and approved friend of Mrs. Denbigh for more than thirty years; was blessed with an excellent temper and many estimable virtues. To these recommendations, however, she unfortunately added one predominant foible, which in conversation, at least, often obscured them so much, that it required some candour and yet more judgment to discriminate her real merit through so thick a mist. She was, what has often been described but can never be too often held up to derision, a female pedant, a female politician, a smatterer in philosophy, a perpetual controvertist!—In her youth she had been, though not a decided beauty, an exceeding pretty woman, which advantage, re-

inforced

inforced by the powerful addition of gold, had gained her many admirers, much delicate flattery, and a great deal of obsequious attention. Time advanced, wrinkles appeared, and lovers disappeared!—The love, Mrs. Westbury found it no difficult matter to dispense with; but the adulation, the general homage, the constant deference—how was she to dispense with these? At once to sink into insignificance, after having been so long held up as an object of universal admiration, was not to be borne! Mrs. Westbury, therefore, in the failure of youth and beauty, had recourse to study—set up for a female critic, and though on a different score, was still by many fools admired, and by many wise men, for the sake of peace, applauded.

With the acuteness and excellent understanding which Mrs. Denbigh possessed, it is not to be imagined she was the last to discover all these little failings. Kind-hearted, however, and affectionate, such errors in a friend who, to counterbalance them, had so many good qualities, she easily pardoned, and endeavoured as much as possible either wholly to over-

look, or unmoved to smile at. Upon follies utterly unmixed with malignancy, yet too deeply rooted by age to be eradicated, she thought it as ungenerous to exercise severity, as it was hopeless to attempt experimental reform.

- Learned dissertations or political arguments apart, Mrs. Westbury could be equally rational and entertaining; and in that light, during the whole evening, did she appear to her youthful visitor. Books were sometimes talked of, but only such as she imagined were within Clarentine's reach, in which number she justly concluded that poems, moral essays, and history might be comprised. Upon *Revolutions, Government, &c. &c.* fortunately for her fair auditor, she wholly forbore touching, well knowing that Mrs. Denbigh (though far more ably qualified to discourse upon such subjects than herself) had an insuperable aversion to them, and wisely suspecting, that with the modest Clarentine it might be the same.

Young Westbury meanwhile had, as soon as any thing like regular conversation began, disappeared—leaving Clarentine infinitely more disgusted by the species

cies of fervility he had displayed subsequent to his discovery of her relationship to a *Baronet*, than she had by any means thought it worth her while to be by all his previous impertinence.

CH A P. XVIII.

CLARENTINE had been about three days at Bath, when from her friend Sophia, to whom she had written before she left Hampstead to inform her of her intended journey, she received the following letter.

Delmington-House, Dec.

MISS DELMINGTON.

“ Why, what an unconscionable, merciless little monopolist of human hearts, you are, Clarentine! A few days since arrived at Welwyn park, with as love-lorn and almost as woe-begone a face as ever my poor brother Edgar had, your *second*

C 2

cast-off,

cast-off, George Eltham, Esq.—The man really made me give a *nervous start* (I am *very nervous*, you know) the instant I beheld him; nor for a long while, guess, try, puzzle and perplex myself as I would, could I possibly make out what was the matter with him. “Surely, thought I, that solemn phiz must portend something direful and strange! Whom have I seen that ever looked at all like him? Why, Edgar. And why did Edgar look like him? Because he was *crossed in love*. Ergo, *this* man must be crossed in love! Now, the next thing is to find out *who* has done this wicked deed.” Accordingly, I set about this arduous undertaking (suspecting *you* a little, all the time); and after four failures, four days shuffling and evasion on *his* part, and four days fruitless examination and cross-examination on *mine*, at length drew, or rather *dragged* from him his horrifying secret.

“You shall hear, for your edification and instruction in a similar case, how I finally succeeded.

“I went yesterday morning (I should certainly not have gone but for the above-mentioned

mentioned purpose, for the day was piercing cold, to call upon Lady Julia, who is now at her father's. Never having lived in the great world, you know, I am as regardless of all ceremony as the wild inhabitant of an African desert:—O, you may truly call *me* an unadulterated *Child of Nature*! Well, in at the little park gate, to which she gave us a key last year, I went (marching up the solemn avenue is my aversion), and from thence making the best of my way, through the glass door in the breakfast-room, entered the house. All was profoundly silent in that quarter of the mansion; and so, after taking an inventory of the many supernumerary moveables I beheld—such as a fierce cocked-hat of Mr. Eltham's upon one chair; a muff and cloak of Lady Julia's upon another; an odious squalling parrot, I presume, of her Ladyship's likeness; a stately gold-headed cane of my Lord's, &c. &c.—I moved on, and without any interruption safely reached the dressing-room.

“I entered—and lo! the first object I beheld was Mr. Eltham in person, alone and reading. “Times are dismally

changed:”

changed :” thought I—this poor man never used to sit thus quietly dozing over a book !”

“ I certified with my accustomed profundity—he bowed with *unaccustomed* gravity ; after which we both sat down.—

“ A very cold day, Sir,” said I—

“ Yes, extremely so,” answered he.

“ Have you been out this morning ?”

“ A little way with Lady Julia, but she found the wind high, and turned back in less than ten minutes.”

“ Upon this I started up, and flying to the glass, “ Ah, true,” cried I, “ the wind *is* high, and ought to have given me a bright colour : and so it has, I protest ! Look at me, Mr. Eltham, I really am extremely like my cousin Clarentine to-day : don’t you think so ?”

“ Mr. Eltham forced a smile, and said, “ why should you not be as well contented to look like *yourself* ?”

“ *Belle comme elle !*” cried I, “ Why because, you know, Clarentine has always been reckoned the beauty of the family ; nay, if I am not mistaken, *you* thought her so as well as every body else. Pray,” added I, delighted to observe he seemed

to sit uneasy, and *fidgetted* upon his chair —“ pray, for I forget what you said about it, have you seen her very lately ?”

“ No,” answered he, rising and strolling to the window with an air of affected indifference —“ not very lately.”

“ Umph !” —thought I —“ that’s a *fib*, I have no doubt !”

“ I said nothing more, however, but moving to the piano forte, stood turning over some of the music that lay scattered upon it, and among the rest, spying the stale old song —

“ Why so pale and wan, fond lover ?”

sat down to the instrument, and with all the expression I could give it, began playing and singing it, I may almost say *at* him, rather than *to* him.

“ Very indecorous, Clarentine, was it not ?

“ The poor man could not stand this —but approaching me with a look somewhat angry and tremendous —“ Miss Sophia,” cried he —(he seems to hate the name of Delmington, and never utters it when he can avoid it), “ these significant looks, your choice of this song, the strange and repeated questions you have

asked me—what do they all mean? What is it you wish me to understand by them?”

“ I thought it best to be honest with him at once, and therefore answered very calmly—“ Only that I am extremely curious, Mr. Eltham, and have an earnest desire to know, when the case becomes my own, how it will be most proper and well-bred to discard an unsuccessful lover : I am sure *you* can give me this information, for your whole aspect tells that you *have* been discarded, and by one, I suspect, who would do it in the civilest way in the world—Miss Clarentine Delmington.”

“ Civil !” repeated he, turning from me and walking about the room in great agitation, “ Civil !—No ; she was imperious, inhuman !”

“ So far, so good,” again thought I—“ my conjectures were right, I find !

“ Then assuming an air of mingled surprise and concern, “ *Clarentine* deserve such an imputation ?” cried I—“ Impossible ! She is gentleness and goodness itself, and I am persuaded, Mr. Eltham, to *you* could never behave with impropriety.”

“Is this astonishment real or affected?” cried he, sitting down near the instrument and looking distrustfully at me—“Has she not written to you? Has she not exulted in her scorn, her haughtiness, her inflexibility!”

“You amaze me!” cried I, what should lead you to entertain such an opinion? She has written to me, it is true, and to my mother also; but not one word is there in *my* letter, at least, that in the most distant degree relates to you.”

“This seemed to wound his pride more than all the rest. Again he arose, and renewing his *quarter-deck walk*, said in a hurried, indignant manner, “I believe, indeed, I need have been under no apprehension that she would take the trouble to record her cruelty! she murders unconsciously—and when she has stabbed the deepest, turns from her victim with the cool unconcern”—

“Of a *butcher*,”—interrupted I—“was not that what you meant?”

“Angry as he was, he seemed half-tempted to smile: but repressing the unseemly propensity, and moving towards the door—“I will leave you, Madam;”

cried he, "raillery upon this subject is more than I can bear!" and was then actually going; but calling him back, and apologizing very seriously for my unseasonable flippancy, I at length softened him, and he ended (by no means sorry, I believe, to have an auditor so willing to listen to him) by recounting to me his whole disastrous story.

"I wish, dear Clarentine, you could have seen with what a half-pitying, half-laughing countenance I heard him. It was impossible to attend to his impassioned, and sometimes almost frantic exclamations and complaints, without being ready to expire: I contrived, however, to conceal my risibility, upon the whole, pretty well; but I sincerely hope I shall never fit in such misery again.

"I believe we were together almost half an hour after he had disburdened his *o'er-fraught heart*, before Lady Julia came to us. Never was relief more welcome! for though his history was concluded, his ravings still continued, and the whole expression of his countenance often assumed such a fierce and *savage* cast, that seriously speaking, I was more than once
so

so heartily frightened, I would have given the world to have been out of the room!

“ Lady Julia, who had been sitting with her father in the library, and did not know I was in the house till she saw me, pressed me extremely to stay dinner, but that, not having had leave given me, I declined. After sitting with her therefore as long as I dared, I went home escorted by Mr. Eltham, who spent the remainder of the day with us.

“ We parted at night exceeding good friends; but if he concludes the horrible fright he put me into is to pass unrevenged, he is wonderfully mistaken! It was impossible to do any thing yesterday but appear to pity him; the next time he comes, however, he will find me a little less compassionate! Are people to be put in fear of their lives by every impatient, mortified lover, who wears willow instead of myrtle?

“ I wanted extremely to make him talk to me, as we were walking home, of Mr. Somerset, but could not manage it at all. Why this shyness? Does he apprehend in him a rival? Clear up this point to me, dear girl, I entreat; and write to me a

detailed account of every wise man or every fool you see, every place you go to, every creature you visit, every pleasure or disappointment you meet with!

“ Adieu, my own Clarentine. Your poor deserted little Emma, who is the only one in the house, by the way, that knows of my having written this mad letter, desires her tenderest love to you, and a thousand grateful thanks for the charming books you so kindly sent her.

“ Adieu again,

“ SOPHIA DELMINGTON.”

The effect this letter had upon Clarentine was much the same with that Mr. Eltham's own conduct had always had: it made her congratulate herself upon the fortunate independence which had given her the power of rejecting him; and led her very naturally to conclude, a passion so indignant and so resentful was not of a nature to be very lasting in itself, or very tender to its object.

“ Such a man,” cried she, “ fiery and impetuous—always exacting implicit submission to his own will, or bursting out
even

even with those he ought either to respect on account of their age or sex, into transports of irrational fury—Oh, such a man was not destined to make me happy! Far, far different is my idea of the disposition of him, I would chuse as a partner through life. To all the spirit and gallantry of youth and courage, I would join humanity and gentleness; to an open intelligent countenance, an expression of benevolence and sensibility; to strong natural parts, the most unpretending diffidence; and to a temper at once generous and placable, a cheerful gaiety equally distinct from turbulence or sadness. Ah! where, “added she,” can such an object be found? or where, when found, is the reasonable hope that should lead me to expect it will ever be my lot to be so allied? There is, there can be upon earth but one such character, and he who possesses it is, I doubt not, lost to me for ever!”

Thus indulging the fond admiration and plaintive regret she had so often determined to suppress, Clarentine, who had hoped so much from time and change of scene, as the hours, days and weeks passed

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passed away, found that the depression of her spirits rather augmented than decreased, and the sadness of her heart took from her all power of exertion and all capacity of enjoyment. No longer surrounded by observers whom she feared, those quick and irritable feelings which had, of late, upon the slightest occasion alarmed her pride and awakened her distrust, were succeeded by a quiet dejection, a settled, but unmurmuring, gentle sorrow, that penetrated Mrs. Denbigh with compassion. She saw that her young friend, pale, languid and oppressed, lost her health as well as her animation, and that although too rational to decline partaking in the amusements that were proposed to her, she yet found no real amusement or relief in any thing. The discovery gave her pain in proportion to the warmth and sincerity of the truly maternal regard she had conceived for her; and determining, if possible, to counteract this dangerous turn of mind, she seized the first opportunity that presented itself of attempting by friendly admonitions and remonstrances to reason her into greater firmness.

“ My

“ My Clarentine,” said she, one morning as they were sitting at breakfast, “ I have a proposal to make to you : this place, contrary to my expectations, seems to disagree with you so much, that I cannot bear to be the occasion of prolonging your stay at it ; and therefore next week we will go back to town.”

“ Dear Madam,” cried Clarentine, alarmed at the very mention of such a scheme—“ why so ? Happy or gay, I expect not to be any where ; but here, at least, I am tranquil ; and as for my health, that can derive nothing but benefit from the air and situation.”

“ But how is it then,” resumed Mrs. Denbigh, “ that acknowledging thus readily the value of tranquillity, you yet suffer yourself to droop and pine with so little fortitude and so little strength of mind ? Clarentine, such weakness is unworthy of you ! it renders useless every acquirement you possess, and every good quality with which you are gifted ; degenerates what was once female softness, blended with spirit and sound sense, into inertia and supineness ; and will, I fear, in time degrade you into a mere lan-

guishing, enervated, *love-sick girl*? Is your case, my young friend, a *new* one? Oh no!—How many notable and contented old women there now are, attending duly to the domestic occupations of their household, scolding their maids, whipping their children, snarling at their husbands, and sitting in judgment upon their neighbours, who once, like you, were sunk in listlessness and apathy, and thought no pleasure equal to that of elegantly indulging their romantic despondence!”

“ Ah, my dear Madam,” cried Clarentine, who had listened to this speech with alternate blushes and smiles, “ is mine an affection that deserves thus to be severely censured? You well know it has not been the mere work of an idle imagination, seeking anxiously, yet selecting unworthily, some object of fancied perfection on whom to bestow unqualified and enthusiastic admiration: on the contrary, it is a sentiment that stole upon me gradually and imperceptibly; which, though never intentionally cherished, grew with my growth and strengthened with my strength. I was yet a mere child, helpless and dependant, when William Somerset,

merfet, at an age when moft boys fly from a nurfery with difdain and horror, was my watchful friend and only companion: we parted long e'er I knew the value of fuch an affociate, but not before, in remembrance of his invariable kindnefs, my heart was attached to him with the warmeft gratitude. In my fecond afylum I found *another* friend, and companions whom I foon learnt to love with nearly equal tendernefs: here, however, the affection I met with in return, though cordial, I believe, and fincere, had neither the ftability, the gentlenefs, or the indulgence of that I had been ufed to from him. Edgar, who was the one at that time ofteneft with me, was frequently unjuft and petulant: a moment of unintentional neglect, a childifh or hafty reproach would irritate and offend him fo deeply, that perhaps during a whole day he would neither fpeak to me, nor listen to any excufe: his fifters, engroffed by other objects, of courfe, had no leifure to beftow upon me that degree of attention to which, unfortunately, I had been accuftomed; fo that often in the midft of play-fellows of my own age, in the midft of
fociety

society and cheerfulness, I felt desolate and unhappy."

"A fatal tendency to encourage causeless repinings, seems to have been your bane through life," said Mrs. Denbigh, here interrupting her—"but go on with your little history, and forgive this abrupt comment."

"Rather call it my *apology*," said Clarentine, smiling, "I have not much more, however, to add; nor ought the recapitulation of our own feelings to take up a great deal of time. Is there one amongst us, who, minutely describing every past emotion of their mind, could not make up, as I have done, a tedious dissertation upon nothing?"

"Well, well, go on, I tell you," cried Mrs. Denbigh, with a sort of impatient pleasantry, "go on, and whatever compliments I can spare shall come afterwards."

Clarentine laughed at this speech, and thus continued—

"Several years now passed, during which, except by letter, my friendly William and I had no intercourse. At length he came down into Devonshire upon a
visit

visit in our neighbourhood, and stopped, he said, at his *father's*, but I doubt not at his ~~own~~ instigation, to visit and enquire after his former little inmate. An accident, not worth relating now, prevented my seeing him till after he had quitted the house ; he found me fainting and senseless upon the road as he was driving through the village, and in that condition carried me back in his carriage to Delmington House. Never, oh, never can I forget, child as I yet was, the look of tenderness and solicitude with which, when recovering, I beheld him standing motionless before me ! It was a look that penetrated my very soul, and would alone have taught me to love him, had not his previous behaviour already disposed, and his subsequent conduct *compelled* me to it ! Again, however, we parted, but not for the length of time we had been separated before ; he returned to us more kind, more animated, more generously interested in all that related to me than I had even dared hope to find him, and during the two days he staid, treated me with a conciliating sweetness, a *more* than fraternal partiality, that left upon me, at his departure,

parture, a melancholy and regret I scarce knew how to conquer."

" Well," cried Mrs. Denbigh, again breaking in upon Clarentine's little narrative, " all this, I confess, was flattering, and insinuating ; but, my dearest girl, have you not in Sir Edgar Delmington, in a young man whose passions must necessarily be so much more ungovernable than your own, an example of fortitude and self-command that ought to stimulate you to emulation ? *He* too, I have been told, knew you from your infancy, was brought up in the same house with you, and cherished for years the most fervent and animated affection for you. Duty, reason, and honour, however, enabled him to conquer this early and habitual prepossession ; and in a case exactly parallel to your own, made of him, at once, a hero and a philosopher ! Are *your* feelings, though less tumultuous, more insurmountable ? Let it not be thought ! Exert your courage, dissipate your mind, try every experiment that the ingenuity of woman can devise, to prove that an opinion so humiliating is groundless and erroneous !"

" The

“The council,” said Clarentine, sighing, “is good, and I will endeavour—I *have* endeavoured always to act as if in pursuance of its dictates: yet, my dearest Madam, similar as the two cases may appear, there is, however, a wide difference between the part that Edgar had to perform, and that which is now assigned to me. From the first moment he discovered to me his unauthorized partiality, I dealt openly and frankly with him; and readily, gladly as I would have promised him my friendship, denied him all claim to my love. Have *I* been treated with equal candour? Oh no! Such ungenerous, unremitting pains, have been taken to lead me into a belief I was beloved, that, till my own observation, and yet more convincingly the explicit avowal of Mrs. Hertford, told me I deceived myself, every action, every look, seemed calculated to infuse into me a positive certainty of Somerset’s attachment! Ah! wonder not then, that whilst entertaining so flattering an illusion, the high opinion I had of his honour and integrity lulled all vigilance to sleep, and left me neither power or inclination to resist the grateful affection

affection I felt for him! I beheld him as a man who from infancy had loved me—who seemed to have no desire so earnest as that of promoting my happiness—as him, in short, by whom it was finally destined to be assured!”

At that moment their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Denbigh’s servant, who brought Clarentine a letter: it came by the post, and was directed in Somerset’s hand. She received it with a degree of agitation she scarce knew how to conceal; and, laying it down upon the table by her, as soon as they were again left by themselves, said to Mrs. Denbigh—

“The writing is Somerset’s—I almost fear to open it!”

“Give it me then,” said that lady, smiling—“and if it is *very* treacherous and *very* tender, I will burn it without suffering you to read it.”

Clarentine hesitated a moment, and then holding it out to her, “Ah! why does he write to me at all?” cried she: “There—take it, dear madam, and, if I can help it, I will not even *wish* to know its contents.”

“Come,

“Come, come,” cried Mrs. Denbigh, “I begin to have some hopes of you! This is the most rational thing you have done yet.” She then opened the letter, and began reading to herself; whilst Clarentine, with her eyes fixed upon her face, sat earnestly observing her, by turns reproaching and applauding herself for the facility with which she had resigned a privilege which would once have been so precious to her.

When Mrs. Denbigh had ceased reading, “Here, my dear,” said she, “take back your letter; it contains a request which no one but yourself can answer.”

“A request!” repeated Clarentine, starting and blushing; “To *me*! Of what nature? What request?”

“Nay, nay, my love,” resumed Mrs. Denbigh, very calmly, “don’t put yourself into such tremors; the favour he asks is as trifling as his style is simple and proper; see what he says yourself, therefore.”

Clarentine held out an unsteady hand for the letter, and read as follows:

MISS

MISS DELMINGTON.

Clifford-street, December.

“ I am unwilling to suppose, my dearest Miss Delmington, that our parting, though abrupt, was therefore unfriendly; and as you prohibited not my writing, take the liberty to address to you a little petition it will give me the utmost pleasure to hear you receive with indulgence.

“ Since you left town I have been down a few days in Northamptonshire, and purpose going thither again during Christmas week with a party of friends, two of whom mean afterwards to spend a short time at Bath. I dare not presume to accompany them! but if, when they have left me, I should direct my wandering course to Delmington House, would you, my gentle friend, whilst I am there, favour me with a letter of introduction to your amiable Madame d’Arzele? I have the most earnest desire to see and become acquainted with her; and under whose auspices could I hope for a more indulgent reception, than under those of her young and lovely benefactress?

“ You appeared at your departure indisposed, dispirited, and, I fear, unhappy :

happy : write to me I beseech you ; tell me you are better ; that the air of Bath agrees with you ; and that, although compelled to suffer by your absence, I have nothing to apprehend for your health !

“ Present my best respects to Mrs. Denbigh : she is my friend, and I hope will assist in determining you to grant my request.

“ Adieu, and may all happiness attend you !

“ WILLIAM SOMERSET.”

The extreme surprise with which Clarentine perused this letter kept her silent some minutes after she had concluded it ; at length, however, pointing to these words, *I purpose going thither again during Christmas week*, she said, with a look of incredulity, “ Do you believe, Madam, he has really such an intention ? Do you believe he will again, and for so long, quit Mrs. Hertford ?”

“ I always believed every thing that a man of honour told me,” answered Mrs. Denbigh, “ except, indeed, his vows of perpetual constancy ! What such repeated journeyings can mean, however, I ac-

knowledge it is beyond my power of, comprehension to find out."

"Thus," cried Clarentine, sighing, "has he ever been—mysterious and unfathomable. Oh! that this painful suspense were over! that, at length, he was actually married, and all doubt of his attachment for ever at an end!"

"A decisive way, it must be owned, of terminating suspense!" cried Mrs. Denbigh: "I did not think, Clarentine, you had resolution to form so sensible a wish. But let me hear what you design to do concerning the letter he requests you to write for him. Shall you send it?"

"Undoubtedly; and the more readily, as I know it will give infinite pleasure to my excellent Madame d'Arzele to see him. On his first arrival he was the constant theme of all my letters to her, and she has often expressed great concern at the idea it was so unlikely she should ever be acquainted with him."

Mrs. Denbigh now arose, and asked her whether she would accompany her on a morning visit to Mrs. Westbury.

"No, my dear Madam, not to-day, if you please: my mind is unusually occupied

pied and perplexed, and just now I can think of nothing but this strange letter."

"Well then," said Mrs. Denbigh, "I will leave you, for the present, to your own contemplations; but in the evening I am determined you shall go to the assembly—and what is more," added she, "you shall dance with your little favourite, Johnny Westbury, if he will have you!"

Clarentine, not believing this speech had any real meaning, made no opposition to the plan, and soon after Mrs. Denbigh left her.

CHAP. XIX.

AT dinner, when Mrs. Denbigh returned—"Well, Clarentine," cried she, "I have made a party for you to-night, and Johnny has *half* promised, provided a certain Hon. Miss Somebody, sister to a certain Lord Somebody, does not make her appearance in the ball-room till after the two first dances are over, he will do

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himself

himself the honour to go down them with you."

"He is really too obliging!" said Clarentine, laughing; "but, dear Madam, is it true you have made this party?"

"Yes, perfectly true. I met Mrs. and Miss Manners at Mrs. Westbury's, and they have promised to call for you at the proper hour. Before you go, however, I desire I may see you with all your plumes and decorations: I am a prodigious judge of modern dress you know, and therefore, lest Johnny should criticise your taste, come and consult mine previous to his seeing you."

"I am afraid," said Clarentine, smiling, "a dress so simple as that I shall wear will neither be worth your attention, Madam, or Mr. Westbury's."

"Well, no matter how simple it is, if, according to Johnny's opinion, it is but *fashionable*: he would expire at the idea of dancing with you, if you had one grain too little or too much powder in your hair, or half a straw's-breadth too long or too short a waist!"

"I will endeavour then," said Clarentine, "to be as correct in all these matters

ters as I can; but really I know so little of the business of a toilet that I am afraid I shall succeed very ill at last."

"In that case," cried Mrs. Denbigh, "I don't know what people can do better than persuade themselves to like you for your originality. A young woman in these days, who is a novice in the science of dress, is so extraordinary a creature, that she ought, I think, to be admired as a curiosity."

They then separated, and Clarentine went to prepare for the evening.

At the hour appointed the two ladies, who had been engaged to go with her, and whom she had several times seen before at Mrs. Westbury's, called for her in their own carriage, and they all proceeded to the assembly-room.

This was the first evening that Clarentine had ever been in public, except, since she had been at Bath, once or twice with Mrs. Denbigh at the play. The confusion she expected, however, to experience, the extreme fullness of the place effectually prevented: the last week had brought down an incredible number of people, all of whom appeared to be con-

centrated in that one spot : consequently, no particular party could be more conspicuous than another, but each seemed to have met there for the sole purpose of being crowded and incommoded.

“ Oh, how much preferable,” thought Clarentine, “ were our little social and cheerful balls at Delmington, to this dull, yet bustling scene !”

“ Soon after, a tall, fine young man, whose countenance was animated and pleasing, and who had for some time been engaged in observing them as they slowly advanced, contrived to approach Miss Manners who had hold of Clarentine’s arm, and said to her in a low voice, yet loud enough to be overheard,—“ Will you introduce me Louisa ?”

“ Yes certainly :”—then turning to Clarentine—“ allow me, my dear Miss Delmington,” added she, “ to present my brother to you.”—

“ Clarentine curtsied, and Mr. Manners very politely addressing her, said—“ I fear, Miss Delmington, that any application to you for the honour of your hand this evening, would now come too late : you are probably engaged already ?”

“ Indeed,”

“ Indeed,” replied Clarentine, half-laughing, “ I scarcely know whether I am or not.”

“ And who,” said Mr. Manners, with some surprise, “ is the extraordinary personage that can leave you in doubt upon such a subject?”

Clarentine then related to him the sort of half engagement Mrs. Denbigh had formed for her in the morning; upon which, Mr. Manners brightening up, said, with a smile—“ I may then safely, Madam, renew my solicitation; since I can assure you it is not ten minutes ago, that I heard Mr. Westbury engage one of Lady A——’s daughters, who had just entered with her mother.”—

Clarentine laughed, and by no means sorry to be released from such a partner, very readily gave her hand to Mr. Manners, and suffered him to lead her towards the dancers.—

Whilst they stood up, it was impossible to engage in any regular conversation; but after a long and confused dance, Mr. Manners seeing her look extremely fatigued, exerted himself to procure for her a seat, and conducting her to

it, hastened to bring her some refreshment, and then placed himself next her during the remainder of the evening.

His conversation was lively and agreeable, and Clarentine found herself so well disposed to like him, that her spirits were insensibly revived by his attention, and her answers to all his gay remarks were made with a cheerfulness nearly equal to his own.

After some general discourse of this animated kind, addressing her somewhat more seriously—"May I ask Miss Delmington," said he, "what stay she designs making in this place?"

"It is very probable," answered Clarentine, "I may yet be here three weeks."—"And may I tell her," resumed he, "what the interested motive was that led me to venture such an enquiry?"

"If you please—certainly."

"Why then," said he, "I wished to know whether at my return from a short visit I am upon the point of making in Northamptonshire, I might flatter myself with the hope of still finding you here."

"In Northamptonshire?" repeated Clarentine, with a faint blush—"And who

whom, may I ask, are you acquainted with in Northamptonshire?"

"One of the oldest friends I have, Captain Somerset, has a seat in that county," answered Mr. Manners.

An involuntary half-sigh escaped Clarentine at these words, and an air of thoughtfulness once more overspreading her but-lately-re-animated countenance, she sunk into a total, but unconscious silence.

Mr. Manners sat some minutes unsuspectingly observing her; at length, however, addressing her again, "I believe," said he, "I have the pleasure, in Miss Delmington, to see a relation and a ward of Captain Somerset's?"

Clarentine only bowed.

"You have seen him lately, I presume?"

"No, Sir, not—not very lately."

"But, however, you can assist me in the solution of a mystery I am very anxious to have explained. Pray what has he been doing with himself all this winter? Is he, as has been reported, upon the point of marriage, and to his fair

mistress, is it, his friends must attribute his long silence and neglect?"

Clarentine's varying colour during this speech almost betrayed her; and the hesitating and embarrassed manner in which she answered him, yet more strongly denoted her emotion—

"I believe—I fancy," said she "he is going—he will be soon married."

"And what sort of a woman is the lady he has selected? you doubtless know her?"

"Yes a little."—

"Is she agreeable?"

Scarcely sensible of what she was saying, "I can't tell," answered the distressed Clarentine.

Mr. Manners laughed—"Upon my word," cried he, "such a reply is not much calculated to give a *very* high opinion of the lady's merit! I should be sorry to suppose, however," added he, more gravely, "that Mr. Somerset had made a choice that was unworthy of him."

Clarentine, upon this, recovering greater presence of mind, compelled herself to say, though in a low and almost inarticulate voice—"I meant no reflection,

flection, Sir, upon the lady, believe me ; but, as I told you, knowing very little of her, I am ill qualified to decide upon her character. She is generally thought, I believe, remarkably agreeable."

" Well," cried Mr. Manners—" I shall certainly endeavour to see her when next I go to town. There is no man in whose happiness I take a greater interest than in Somerset's ; and no man, I am convinced, who deserves happiness more."

This conversation was here, to Clarentine's infinite relief, interrupted by young Westbury, who, after leading his partner to a seat with the most obsequious respect, negligently approached Clarentine, and said—

" So, you have not danced at all, Ma'am, this evening?"

" Not, at least, with the cruel Mr. Westbury!" said Mr. Manners, with a laugh—

" Cruel!" repeated he—" No, upon honour, that was-n't it! The fact is, I have been engaged—that is conditionally engaged, to Miss A——, these three days."—

“And the condition was, I suppose, Mr. Westbury,” said Clarentine, archly, “that you were to renounce her, if an Earl’s or a Duke’s daughter claimed you in her stead!”

“I am sorry to hear such a partial account of your gallantry, Westbury;” cried Mr. Manners, shaking his head—a poor miserable Commoner like me will be afraid to speak to you soon!”

“Pshaw, pshaw, what nonsense you talk!” cried the young coxcomb, taking out his glass and beginning very critically to examine a party of ladies who just then were passing.

“Pray, Mr. Westbury,” said Clarentine, selecting from amongst them one who was remarkably pretty—“what do you think of that young lady?”—

“She’s very well—but her hair is not turned up high enough—you don’t see enough of the *contour* of her throat.”

“Well, but what do you say to the one who is walking next her?”—

“Her waist is hideous—and those long sleeves are entirely out.”—

“A little beyond, however,” said Mr. Manners, “is a lady whose very elbows
bows

bows are bare—what's your opinion of her?"—

"She's better—something better; but there's no ease, no *bend* in her form: she's as upright as a dart—there's nothing *picturesque* about her!"—

Mr. Manners, now casting his eyes towards a poor girl who was extremely deformed, and yet dressed in the most extravagant height of the *ton*—"what do you say to *that* fair nymph, Westbury?" cried he—"she has *bend* enough, I hope?"—

"Why she's not amiss, really, considering: there's taste in the arrangement of her dress, and upon the whole she positively looks like a girl of fashion."

Here Mr. Manners and Clarentine, unable to preserve their gravity any longer, both burst at the same moment into a laugh, which offended the poor *connoisseur* so much, that completely discomfited, he turned upon his heel and abruptly walked away.

"Was there ever so absurd a puppy!" at length exclaimed Mr. Manners, following him with a contemptuous look as he

he crossed the room—I've no patience with the vain idiot!"

"O, blefs me," cried Clarentine, "do not bestow upon the poor little man such ferious indignation! I think he is extremely entertaining; and to me, his character is quite new."

"In what enviable retreat have you then lived," said Mr. Manners, "where these pests of society gained no admittance?"—

"I have spent," answered she, laughing, "the greatest part of my life in Devonshire."—

"O, happy Devonshire! and thrice-happy all its favoured inhabitants! Must I despair of ever obtaining a refuge there? If you have any pity, Miss Delmington, take me in your *suite* when next you go."

"What, and deprive the world of so willing an admonisher! I would not be accessory to such an evil on any account."

During this speech, Clarentine, in taking her handkerchief out of her pocket, let drop without perceiving it a little silver trinket, which, as it fell, ringing slightly
upon

upon the ground, caught Mr. Manners' attention, and made him stoop to take it up. He looked at it very attentively a minute before he either spoke, or she knew what he held; and then presenting it to her with a smile—

“Why,” said he, “where *Certainty* should reside, is *Hope* substituted in her place? Why does Miss Delmington carry about with her an emblem she should resign to those children of nature who are less partially endowed?”

Clarentine, who at first had not attended to what he offered her, now casting her eyes upon it, coloured violently, and eagerly seizing it, put it back into her pocket; at the same moment rising, and hastily saying—

“Can you imagine where your sister is?”

“No,” answered he, following her, “but if you will lend me your *anchor* to rest my hopes upon during the toilsome search, I will go in pursuit of her.”

“I would not wish,” said Clarentine, attempting to laugh, “you should rest them upon so feeble a support.”

“To

“ To obtain *hope* from you then, any way but by surprise, is, I perceive, impossible! Pray, did Captain Somerset teach you the importance of that invaluable symbol?—was it *his* gift?”

“ No, no,” cried Clarentine, turning away from his arch enquiring eyes in great confusion, “ it was not, indeed!”

Mr. Manners, seeing her look really disconcerted, had too much good-nature to pursue the subject; but whenever, in the course of the evening, her eyes again met his, she beheld in them an expression of comic significance, that abashed her so much, she was obliged immediately to look another way.

When they were going, and he was leading her to the carriage—

“ Captain Somerset, I presume,” said he, “ in his province of guardian, has the happiness of corresponding with you, and therefore, Miss Delmington, if I request to be made the bearer of any letter you may wish to send him, I hope I shall not be thought impertinent.”

Clarentine, endeavouring to speak with steadiness, said—

“ When

“ When, Sir, do you set out ? ”

“ On Thursday morning, and, if I have your permission, to-morrow I will do myself the honour to call for your dispatches.”

They were now at the coach door, and Clarentine had only time to bow her thanks, before, having handed her in, he wished her good night, and returned to the ball-room.

Provoked at her own unguarded behaviour, and extremely mortified at the idea of having given rise to any strange conjectures in Mr. Manners, Clarentine was absent and silent the whole way home, and spent a night of unusual restlessness and disturbance. Half dreading, yet half wishing to see him the next day, she determined, by the assumed tranquillity with which she meant to listen to all he could say, even concerning Somerset, to dispel every suspicion he might entertain, and prevent every remark he might promulgate. The *anchor*, (Lady Julia's former gift) which had unfortunately excited so many embarrassing reflections, she immediately locked up, almost tempted (diminished in her eyes as at this time

was

was its allusive value) to throw it wholly away. She had hitherto kept it expressly in remembrance of Somerset; but so earnestly did she now wish to drive him from her thoughts, that even this trifling memorial she thought it almost wrong to preserve.

At breakfast the next morning, when Mrs. Denbigh asked for an account of her ball, she faithfully related to her all that had passed, and prepared her for the visitor they were to expect: after which, sitting down to write to Somerset, she shewed her, when she had concluded it, the following cold and formal epistle.

CAPT. SOMERSET.

Bath, December.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ The letter you wish to deliver to Madame d’Arzele in my name, I shall be happy to send whenever, or wherever you please. It will give her pleasure, I am sure, to become known to you.

“ Accept my best thanks for your obliging enquiries concerning my health, which is, I flatter myself, considerably
amended,

amended, and, I doubt not, will soon be perfectly restored.

“ Mrs. Denbigh joins with me in hoping your intended excursion will prove agreeable, and desires her best compliments.

“ I remain, dear Sir,

“ With great regard,

“ Your obliged,

“ And grateful humble servant,

“ CLARENTINE DELMINGTON.”

“ This letter is what you may call short and—*not* sweet!” cried Mrs. Denbigh, when she had read it; “ he will think, I fear, it accords very ill with the kindness and cordiality of his own.”

“ I hope and believe,” said Clarentine, affecting to speak with indifference, “ he will think very little about it.”

“ There are cases,” said Mrs. Denbigh, “ when young ladies may be permitted to *tell lies* with impunity, and this is one; or else, Clarentine, you may depend upon it I should not suffer that false, *I hope*, to pass uncensured.”

“ Ah, my dear madam,” said Clarentine, half smiling, “ there would be no end
of

of censuring me upon that score, for, of late, my *whole life* has been a *lie* !”

“ Some part or other of every body’s life must be such,” said Mrs. Denbigh; “ mine was a lie, when, at sixteen an old grandmother I had carried me down into Northumberland, and obliged me to tell her I liked it ! My poor husband’s was a lie, when he first married me, and thought it needful to say he loved me !”

Here Clarentine, who sat directing Somerset’s letter at the table, discontinued her employment, and looking up with an air of innocent surprise, said,—“ And did he *not* love you, then ?”

“ No, not at all, the first six months.”

“ Good Heaven, how terrible ! How could you marry him ?”

“ In the first place, he told *his lie* so well, I did not know he had this dislike to me ; and in the next, my father chose him for me, and left me no negative voice.”

“ Well, but,” said Clarentine, eager to hear the result of this frightful beginning —“ did he love you better afterwards, Madam ? were you happy ?”

“ Yes,

“Yes, very. I never suspected his affection had been dissembled till he told me so himself, and by that time it was become real, though by no means, I must acknowledge, *romantic!*”

“And yet,” said Clarentine, “without a little romance in youth, what is life good for?”

“Every rational enjoyment that sober common sense ought to render valuable to us.”

“But, my dearest Mrs. Denbigh, do you expect *me* to have already acquired a sufficient portion of this *sober common sense* to think so?”

“No, I know you have not; but a little longer residence with me, I flatter myself, will give it you. There are certain words with which *sentimentalists by profession* nourish their folly, that I have totally effaced from my vocabulary, and never permit even my friends to use if I can help it. *Delicacy* (such false delicacy as they mean) is one; *refinement* is another; *sensibility* is a third; *susceptibility* (the most odious of all) is a fourth; *enthusiasm* is a fifth; and lastly comes that ideal bugbear, **CONSTANCY**, a term of which no

woman ought to know the meaning till after she is either married, or positively engaged."

Before Clarentine had time to answer this speech, the door opened, and Mr. Manners was announced.

Clarentine introduced him to Mrs. Denbigh, who, though she well knew the ladies of his family, had never before seen him, and then they all took their seats.

After some general conversation, casting his eyes towards the letter which still lay upon the table,—“ May I flatter myself,” said he, “ that Miss Delmington has been so good as to remember the tacit promise she gave me last night? Are the credentials I am to carry to my friend ready?”

Clarentine thanking him for condescending to become her courier, put the letter into his hands.

“ Ah, Madam,” cried he, “ call not that a condescension which is only a proof of my self-interestedness. Captain Somerset and I have been separated so long, that to secure myself as cordial a reception as in former times I was always assured of obtaining, I thought it necessary

to apply for the most precious introductory presentation I could procure."

"If that was your view," said Clarentine, "it would have been more politic to have addressed yourself elsewhere: you had better, I believe, give me my letter again, for I much doubt its having the efficacious power you expect."

"No, no, Sir," cried Mrs. Denbigh, keep it now you have it: a long-absent friend requires not such potent recommendation as one whom we have seen more lately, and therefore content yourself *this* time with being the bearer of a mere letter of civility, and reserve for your *next* meeting the letter of tenderness."

"I am sorry you give me reason to suppose," cried he, "*both* will not come from the same hand."

"Nay, that is ungrateful!" said Mrs. Denbigh, "when instead of *one* we are proving to you that you have *two* strings to your bow, ought you to express such a regret?"

"My regret, Madam," answered he, "may find some apology in its disinterestedness—it is wholly for my friend."

"Are

“Are you not afraid, Mr. Manners,” said Clarentine, smiling, “that *your* partial gallantry will incur the same reproach, Mr. Westbury’s received from you last night? You know nothing of the lady at whose expence you have now been pleased to compliment me, and can by no means be certain your regret is at all justifiable.”

“I have two infallible guides upon this subject,” cried he; “my ears upon *one* occasion, and my eyes whenever I have the honour of seeing you.”

“Your ears?”

“Yes; did they not last night inform me, that Miss Delmington, whose countenance alone bears testimony to her natural candour, thought the lady in question too insignificant an object to merit any place in her remembrance? Such a discovery may surely well justify my regret!”

“I was not aware,” said Clarentine, deeply blushing, “of the severe inference you would draw from so momentary a fit of absence!”

Mr. Manners was beginning some very eager reply, when the entrance of his sister, and presently after of Mr. Westbury, put an end to the subject.

As

As the morning, though cold, was clear and fine, Miss Manners, at the end of a short visit, proposed to Clarentine taking a walk with her to the Upper Crescent: to this she very readily consented, and escorted by the two gentlemen, they immediately set out.

Mr. Manners kept by her side during the whole way, alternately amusing her by the aptness and vivacity of his general remarks, and embarrassing her by the archness of his distant allusions to the subjects she had before so gladly flown from: the perfect good-breeding, however, with which he thus ingeniously tormented her, and, yet more, the indulgence which his acknowledged intimacy with Somerset unconsciously disposed her to shew him, prevented the possibility of her being seriously displeased, and kept her in good humour with him till the moment they parted.

In their way home; Miss Manners addressing Clarentine in a low voice, whilst Mr. Westbury's head was turned aside, said, "I must call this morning at Mrs. Westbury's—my mother desired it; but do pray go with me."

“ If you wish it,” answered Clarentine, in the same tone, “ I will certainly ; but what makes you ask it so earnestly ?”

“ O dear, there is nothing so formidable to me as a forenoon visit there : she is always surrounded by snarling politicians, and solemn authors, and musty dictionaries, and huge folios ; and up to her very chin in learning and philosophy ; and I know nothing in the world of all this.”

“ But do you expect *me*,” said Clarentine, laughing, “ to be any wiser ?”

“ O no, you’re a good, unaffected creature, I know : but if you go with me, I shall, at least, have somebody to talk to, whom I can understand and be understood by ”

“ If that is your reason,” said Clarentine, “ I am wholly at your command.”

They were now arrived at Mrs. Westbury’s door, and still attended by Mr. Manners (young Westbury made his bow as soon as he found where they were going), gave in their names, and were shewn up to that lady’s dressing-room.

Clarentine, as she entered, beheld the *female critic* sitting before a large table,

covered with books, pamphlets, papers, pens and ink. Stretched out at his ease, in an arm-chair near the fire, sat a portly and learned professor of mathematics, who, by the start he gave as they walked in, evidently betrayed either how deeply the sublimity of his contemplations, or the soundness of his *stolen nap*, had previously absorbed every faculty. Intently poring over some profoundly scientific *Greek manuscript*, which, in honour of his own learning, he had brought with him in his pocket, at one end of the table, opposite Mrs. Westbury, sat a little withered, smirking man, in a rusty black coat, who, at the same time that he aspired to the reputation of a *servant*, likewise aimed at that of a man of gallantry, and was the ladies most obsequious and devoted slave. Lastly, balancing himself as he stood near the window, was a short, thick, clumsy-looking man, with enormous black eye-brows, frowning over a newspaper, and muttering execrations to himself every word he read.

“ And which,” said Clarentine, addressing Miss Manners in a low voice, after they had been some time seated,

“ which of these three dignifies himself with the title of *philosopher* ? ”

“ Why, I believe they every one pretend to it in some degree ; but the philosopher *par excellence* is *that* gentleman ” — looking towards him who frowned at the window.

“ I should sooner,” said Clarentine, “ have taken him, by his employment, for a *politician* .”

“ O, he’s both : politics and philosophy always go together now ? ”

“ His countenance, at least, does not denote him to be of the sect of *laughing philosophers* .”

“ Bless me, no ; he never laughs but *in scorn* .”

Here their attention was attracted by the little man in black, who looking up with a set smile, and waving his hand as he spoke, said —

“ Madam, I must beg leave to assure you, that in this short disquisition there is more exquisite eloquence, more wonderful profundity, more accurate criticism, than in any performance of the kind I have met with for many years.”

“ Whose

“ Whose writings does it criticise, Mr. Lea ?” enquired Mrs. Westbury.

Mr. Lea, with extreme emphasis, uttered some hard Greek name, and was then proceeding thus—“ It can be no new information to a lady of your universal erudition, that this incomparable author”—when the *philosophical politician* abruptly interrupting him, called out—

“ These d—mn—d news-writers ! How they do make my blood boil ! Here’s a fellow now,” striking the back of his fingers against the paper, “ who, for half-a-crown a day, will say and unsay the same confounded lie six times in one week !—By all that’s good, Madam,” turning to Mrs. Westbury, “ it astonishes me to think you can take in such a flagitious compilation of falsehood and infamy !”

“ Is *this* a specimen of the gentleman’s *philosophy* ?” asked Clarentine, in a low voice, turning to Miss Manners.

“ Hush, hush !—Hear the lady’s answer.”

“ My dear Sir,” cried Mrs. Westbury, “ you are partial, you are prejudiced : that’s one of the best papers that comes out.”

“ Ay? Ay?” said the learned Doctor, “ let me see it then; I want to change mine, and I don’t know what other to order.”

“ Take my word for it, Doctor,” said Mrs. Westbury, “ you can’t chuse a better than that. But now, Mr. Lea, let me hear a little more about your Greek manuscript: what author did you say”—

“ Madam,” interrupted Mr. Lea, the same invariable smile still adorning his countenance, “ with your permission, before these young ladies,” looking particularly at Clarentine, “ we will have recourse to some more compatible subject. Doubtless to the minds of uninitiated youth these remote and inapplicable themes must be too intricate and unper-spicious to afford them any portion of mental recreation: and, Madam, I make it a point, as pertinently as I can, to administer to all such conversation as I surmise best accords with the age, sex, and capacity of my auditors.”—

“ O, mercy,” said Miss Manners, in a whisper to Clarentine, “ there will be no enduring that man if he once takes it
into

into his head to address his pedantic *jargon* to us! Do pray, let's be off!"

Clarentine, as little disposed to prolong the visit as her friend, instantly arose to go; and Mr. Manners starting up at the same moment, they all three took their leave, and hastened away.

When they were in the street, "Good Heaven," exclaimed Clarentine, "how different a woman Mrs. Westbury always appeared to me before! I never saw her so surrounded till this morning."

"O, she *has* a few lucid intervals," cried Miss Manners, "and before Mrs. Denbigh, particularly, I've known her very rational: however, we did not stay half long enough to behold her in her real perfection; I dare say she and the politician will have a furious quarrel before they part!"

"But now," said Clarentine, "will you have the goodness to explain to me your reasons for dubbing him a *philosopher*?"

"Why, in the first place, he publicly professes Atheism, and in the next"—

"O, that's enough!" interrupted Clarentine; "I desire to hear no more either of him or his principles."

“ Well, then, let’s change the subject: what do you do with yourself this evening?”

“ I shall stay at home to rest after the raking of last night.”

“ O, that’s a horrid plan! You had better go to the play with us.”

“ *Much* better,” said Mr. Manners.

“ No, indeed,” cried Clarentine, “ if I had no *other* objection, I could not bear to leave Mrs. Denbigh two evenings alone.”

“ O, Mrs. Denbigh shall be of the party!” cried Miss Manners—“ I’ll run up and ask her directly.”

And then, without giving Clarentine time to stop her, being just arrived at the door and finding it open, she rushed into the house and up stairs in a moment, Mr. Manners and Clarentine both following her.

Before they reached the dining-room, Mrs. Denbigh, unwilling to neglect any opportunity of dissipating her young friend’s thoughts, had already given the consent that was required of her; and soon after, rejoicing in their success, the
brother

brother and sister went home to dress for dinner.

“ Why, my dearest Madam,” cried Clarentine, when they were gone, “ what a life you are determined I shall lead!”

“ Any thing, my good child, rather than suffer you, in your present disposition of mind, to stay at home and *think*.”

“ Do you, then, imagine it is impossible to think in a play-house?”

“ Oh, perverse people will do what they ought *not* to do, every where, but I am persuaded less effectually in a play-house than shut up in their own apartment. Go up and dress therefore, and let me hear no more *delicate objections*.”

Clarentine half provoked, yet unable to refrain laughing, was forced to obey, and at night when she returned, almost against her own will, was compelled to acknowledge she had really been entertained.

C H A P. XX.

NEAR a week now passed on much in the same dissipated manner; at the end of which, Clarentine, wholly unused to such a way of life, was laid up with a severe cold, and obliged, for several days, to confine herself entirely to her own room.

During this penitential retreat, she received a second letter from Sophia.

MISS DELMINGTON.

Delmington-House, January.

“ I do not know what you may be in *your* part of the world, but *here* we have been exceedingly gay. Lord Welwyn gave a very elegant ball two nights ago, at which we were all present, and I had the honour of dancing, if not the whole evening, at least the greatest part of it, with your friend Mr. Eltham. Since he has made me (or rather since I made myself) his confidant, it is astonishing what progress I seem to have made in his good graces: he never has a sorrow or a joy
that

that he does not come to impart to me; and as both very often arise from causes equally frivolous, he has now got so used to being laughed at, that he not only bears it with stoical patience, but sometimes even catches the infection. The grim aspect he brought down with him is considerably improved within this last fortnight, and I have great reason to hope, that I shall now in a short time restore him to all his former gay and youthful gallantry.

“ My dearest mother, who knows nothing of his motives for thus distinguishing and attending me, and, I dare say, concludes very often he is insidiously laying siege to her daughter’s heart; when, in fact, he is only bewailing the cruelty of her niece, looks extremely grave upon these occasions, and yesterday, without assigning any reason for it, had the inhumanity to forbid my ever going alone to Welwyn Park while he stays there! Dear Madam, you need be under no alarm!—he thinks of me only as of a good-humoured rattle, whose conversation serves a little to beguile the horrors of disappointment, and lighten the burthen

of his heavy woes ! He must be certain *I* have no design, and I believe we may all be equally certain *he* has none.

“ My brother Edgar is now at home, and pays very assiduous court to his pretty mistress, who, by the way, really grows prettier and prettier every hour:—ay, Clarentine, and so do I too, if I am to believe honest friend Eltham !—He was yesterday (and yet I had been up dancing half the night before) complimenting me upon this subject, in a style of courtliness it would, I am persuaded, have done your heart good to hear, when, finding he dwelt longest upon the lustre of my charming eyes, I hastily interrupted him to ask, whether they were like Lucy Barclay’s, of dauntless memory !

“ Heaven forbid !” exclaimed he, laughing—

“ In what do they differ ?” enquired I—

“ In every thing—in form, in expression, and even in colour.”

“ Are they like Clarentine’s ?”

“ He hesitated—but at last said—“ *I* have reason to think them preferable.”

“ And why so ?”

“ Because,”

“ Because,” answered he, smiling, “ their beams, though arch and sportive, are likewise merciful and friendly—and upon me were never played, but with a sort of tempered fire, which animates, without appalling.”

“ There, Clarentine—what do you think of my *animating powers*! By his account, however, of the *appalling* influence of yours, I fear, my good girl, you dealt very hardly with this poor man. He is horrid sore yet, and your name, unexpectedly uttered, will often make him literally start! I take pretty good care, though, he should never do so on hearing it from *me*; for when we are together, I am perpetually repeating it, on purpose, as you do with young skittish horses, to use him to the object he shies at. Edgar used to be quite as *nervous* upon this subject; but I think that all powerful medicine, absence, has now nearly cured him. In nervous cases, brought on by *appalling eyes*, absence, I believe, is your only valerian!

“ My mother has just had a charming letter—elegant, respectful, yet friendly, from Mr. Somerset. He is now, as you
know

know I suppose, in Northamptonshire, and purposes coming here for a few days before he returns to town. I am enchanted at the idea of seeing him, and my mother, likewise, is so much pleased, that she has written to him by return of post to express the greatest satisfaction such a prospect gives her.

“ I could not help thinking whilst I was reading his letter, what an incomparable trio we should have, if this unhappy man (as I cannot but suspect) is also one of your *cast-offs*!—yet—*Somerfet* unsuccessful! how should that be?—Eltham would not be so icy about him if he was really a brother-willow! I cannot make it out; yet something there *is* to make out, I am certain. I wonder whether it will be possible to wreathe myself into *his* confidence as I did into Eltham’s:—I am afraid not. Wifeacres like you and *Somerfet* are never so easy to expound, as crazy-brained people like Eltham and I.

“ Your poor Madame d’Arzele is upon the eve of experiencing a severe loss: her brother, our excellent Chevalier, is going abroad very shortly to join some troops
in

in the West-Indies, I believe, or in Germany, or Holland, or somewhere in short. We are all greatly concerned at his departure, and as for her, poor little soul! she looks quite unhappy. Write to her again soon, my best Clarentine; and since she cannot be revived by your cheering presence, soothe and comfort her by your distant kindness. There is nobody, I believe, upon earth, she loves with more tenderness than you—therefore one word of consolation from your pen will weigh more than thousands from our lips.

“ Galloping up the avenue, here comes Mr. Eltham: farewell therefore; I am going to hold his stirrup while he alights!

“ Yours ever,

“ S. D.”

Clarentine read this gay letter to Mrs. Denbigh, who was sitting with her at the time she received it, and who, when she had concluded, said, with a smile—

“ *Designs*, I believe indeed, your giddy friend has none; but *without* design, if she don't take care, it appears very probable her little heart will be drawn in:

in: she will flutter about the flame till she finges her wings—I only wish *he* may finge his *whiskers*, and then all will go well, and they may make a very happy couple. Is she pretty?”

“Yes,” answered Clarentine, “she has a sort of *Hebe face*, full of dimples and good-humour, that is, extremely bewitching; and the dazzling brightness of her complexion surpasses any thing I ever beheld.”

“O then,” said Mrs. Denbigh—“with such a character and such a form, she will attach him, I have no doubt; at present he is not upon his guard against her; he looks upon her, as she says, merely as a comic, laughing girl, with whom to chat and rally is as safe as it is pleasant. In a little while, however, if she is really thus attractive, shut up as they both are in so secluded a part of the world, he will find himself restless and *ennuiez* without her, and to obviate all future *dismissions*, will, at once, honestly declare himself, and make proposals to her family.”

“Your prediction, my dear Madam,” said Clarentine, “exactly reminds me of what Mr. Eltham once said of her himself:

self: he was describing her, as you have done, as a gay, animated girl, who without beauty enough to fascinate at first sight, *would begin by amusing, and end by attaching*: if such should be the case, however, do you think my poor Sophia would be permanently happy with him?"

"Why not? We never heard that Mr. Eltham, tho' wild and thoughtless, was decidedly profligate, or^r deliberately wicked. His temper, you once said, Lord Welwyn had told you was admirable, no contradiction of which were the empassioned and lover-like rages he fell into on being so abruptly discarded: any man of strong feelings upon such an occasion might be pardoned for betraying some degree of resentment; and really, my censures upon him have always been so mixed with pity, that I am rejoiced to think he has, at last, met with an honest, *unsentimental* girl who will permit him to lay his willows at her feet."

"You seem to be of opinion, Madam," said Clarentine, "he was ill used!"
"Not exactly that: but he was certainly *harshly* used, and at the time he received his

his *cong  * had really done nothing to deserve it."

Clarentine, a little shocked at the incontrovertible truth of this observation, remained silent; and Mrs. Denbigh, reading her thoughts, hastened to change the subject.

At the end of a few days, Clarentine was sufficiently recovered to be able, though she still confined herself in an evening, to walk out about an hour every morning. It was on her return from one of these early rambles, that, ascending the steps of Mrs. Denbigh's house, she beheld Mr. Manners, who, after a fortnight's absence, was hastening, he said, to pay his respects to her.

Clarentine, in whom his presence always awakened an emotion of mingled pleasure and confusion, which was now increased by the recollection of his having so lately parted from Somerset, blushed deeply the instant he addressed her; and, during some minutes, had scarcely presence of mind sufficient to answer his general enquiries with any tolerable degree of steadiness or composure. This, however, he affected not to observe; but
when

when they reached Mrs. Denbigh's usual sitting-room, and the first compliments between him and that lady were over, taking out his pocket-book, and presenting Clarentine a letter, he said—"From Captain Somerset, Madam, who, at the same time that I delivered it, desired me to give his best respects."

Clarentine, now blushing a yet deeper die, received it with down-cast eyes; and, in a voice scarcely audible, stammered out something like an acknowledgment for his goodness in taking charge of it.

"I hope, Sir," said Mrs. Denbigh, "you left your friend perfectly well?"

"Yes, Madam, in *health*, I hope he was; but in *spirits* he appeared ill indeed."

Clarentine fearfully looked up; and Mrs. Denbigh, in a tone that was somewhat sarcastic, said, "And what can have affected his spirits so prodigiously?"

"Hopelessness and absence," answered Mr. Manners; stealing a side-long glance at the astonished Clarentine.

"Very extraordinary complaints for a man to suffer by, who has his cure in his own power!" cried Mrs. Denbigh, with yet

yet encreasing irony.—“ Pray, why does he prolong his *absence* if it causes him such exquisite misery ?”

“ Because he has no encouragement to shorten it.”

Mrs. Denbigh was silent a moment; and then, shaking her head, and looking very humble, she said, “ You are too problematical for me, Mr. Manners: I must give up all hope of understanding you.”

“ And do I appear to you, Miss Delmington, equally unintelligible ?”

“ Equally, Sir,”—answered she, in a low voice.

“ You have more anxiety, however, to elucidate the mystery ?”

“ No, not at all.”

“ Then certainly,” resumed Mr. Manners, “ I will not presume to force an explanation upon you; we will therefore start another subject: pray who did you dance with at the last assembly ?”

Clarentine, though extremely provoked with him, compelled herself to answer this, and several other questions of the same nature, with an appearance of perfect unconcern; and very soon after,
saying

saying he hoped he should have the honour of meeting her at the rooms in the evening, he arose and took leave.

Mrs. Denbigh and Clarentine sat looking at each other some minutes after he was gone in utter silence. At last, "Are we to understand by all this," cried Clarentine, "that Mrs. Hertford is *grown cruel*?"

"I imagine so," answered Mrs. Denbigh, laughing—"or that Somerset himself has changed his love, and imbibed a passion for some fair tygres."

Clarentine shrugged her shoulders with a look of incredulity, but forbearing to say any thing further, broke open the letter Mr. Manners had brought her.

It contained not more than six lines, and was written with a coldness almost equal to her own. He began by thanking her for granting his request; and then, begging she would send the promised letter to him at Lady Delmington's as soon as she had leisure, concluded with a few faint congratulations upon the emendation of her health.

Clarentine's heart was too full, when she had read this chilling scroll, to make

any comments upon it; therefore putting it silently into Mrs. Denbigh's hand, she retired to her own room to execute the commission it contained.

C H A P. XXI.

THE last week of Mrs. Denbigh's stay at Bath was now nearly elapsed, and she and her young friend were already making preparations for their departure, when, just as they had risen from breakfast one morning, Miss Manners unexpectedly made her appearance—

“ I am come,” cried she, eagerly, “ to beg, to entreat, that you will spend the evening at our house to-morrow: we are to have a delightful little private dance; only fifteen or sixteen couple, and as I have heard you say, Miss Delmington, you cannot indure the great assemblies, I *insist* upon your coming to our Lilliputian one.”

“ You

"You are very peremptory!" cried Clarentine, smiling.

"Why the dance was half made on your account."

"On *my* account?"

"Yes; mama was very unwilling to agree to it, till my brother and I determined her, by representing the necessity of doing something civil by Mrs. Denbigh and you before your departure."

"O then," said Mrs. Denbigh, "I am to take a share in this honour?"

"Certainly."

"But who do you intend shall open the ball with me? Will your brother, do you think, lead me out?"

"I have not a doubt of it," answered Miss Manners laughing.

"Very well then; go home and desire him to get his white gloves ready, and tell your mother, that if she will permit us to make our ~~curtseys~~ curtsies at eleven o'clock, we will do ourselves the honour of waiting upon her."

"At eleven o'clock? Dear me, why so early?"

"Because the next day we design to begin our journey, and it has always been
my

my plan, on the eve of travelling, to endeavour to get a little sleep."

"But Miss Delmington need not run away so soon?"

"If she is wise, I think she will; all that, however, I leave to her own determination."

Miss Manners then shaking hands with Clarentine, and thanking Mrs. Denbigh for her ready acquiescence, hastened away, full of bustle and business.

The next day, about an hour before she set out to fulfil her engagement, the following letter was delivered to Clarentine from Madame d'Arzele.

MISS DELMINGTON.

Mont Repos, January.

"In what terms shall I thank my beloved and amiable Clarentine for the invaluable new acquaintance she has procured me? Your Mr. ~~Somerset~~ is all that is excellent in man; distinguished in his address; elegant in his conversation; kind, good, and benevolent in his nature! He has made a complete conquest of *me*, and the noble trait I have to relate will, I hope, confirm his conquest of *you*.

"Our

“ Our Sophia, I find, by the affectionate condolences contained in the letter your friend brought me, has informed you of the heavy deprivation I am about to sustain: my poor Chevalier leaves me in a few days, but he leaves me with a heart, proud as it is, so overflowing with gratitude, that there seems no longer to be in it any room for sorrow.

“ One of our late poets, you know, has justly and beautifully said, that

“ En tout pays tous les bons cœurs sont freres.” *

You will not be surprised therefore to hear, that your amiable Somers^{et} and our *bon* Chevalier became friends almost from the first hour they met. The *loyauté* and the manly simplicity of their congenial minds, attached them to each other with a cordiality and zeal that did them equal honour, and afforded me the liveliest pleasure to behold. Day after day, by mutual appointment, they spent whole hours in wandering about the country together, talking over the wretched situation of poor, unhappy France—*all: fl: nt*

* Florian.

themselves, one minute by fearful predictions, and chearing each other the next by brighter conjectures. At length, however, Mr. Somerset's time was expired, and he called to take leave of us: it was this very morning, and my brother and I were both talking of him when he appeared.

“ My excellent friends,” cried he, as he entered, “ I am grieved to say that I am now come to bid you farewell: the happiness I have derived from your society since I have been here, scarcely leaves me the courage to quit you; and yet,” added he, a gleam of unusual satisfaction brightening his expressive face, “ and yet, I have a faint hope held out to me, that the motive for which I go may be attended with the most exquisite felicity to me! Ah, Madame d'Arzele,” continued he, taking my hand and half smiling, “ what would I not give to make you the companion of my journey—the assistant in my researches into one of the best, but least penetrable hearts, that ever inhabited a female bosom!”

“ We both laughed at his acknowledged perplexity upon a subject we could not but allow must be so interest-

ing

ing to him, and sincerely wished him all the success he could desire. Who this *impenetrable female* was, however, we ventured not to enquire, nor did he seem disposed to inform us; for, rising at the end of a short visit, he first paid his compliments to me in the most polite and friendly terms, assuring me he should take the earliest opportunity of waiting upon me whenever he renewed his visit in my neighbourhood; and then turning to the Chevalier, and putting a small packet into his hand, "My friend," said he, "you will find two letters within that cover, which I must beg you to deliver for me when you reach your place of destination: they are directed; but you will have the goodness, before you go, to seal them." So saying, he shook hands with him in the most cordial manner; wished him health and prosperity; embraced the children; and bowing again to me, sprang into the chaise that was waiting for him at the door, and drove away with a velocity that soon carried him beyond our sight.

"We returned, melancholy and silent, into the parlour; and there the Chevalier, glad of any thing to do, opened the

packet, and taking up the sealing-wax, prepared to obey his friend's last request. Judge, however, what were his sensations, when, in addition to the above-mentioned letters, which were directed to two British officers in the West Indies, he beheld, addressed to the *Chevalier de Valcour*, and enclosed in a written *enveloppe*, a Bank bill for 100l.

“ The papers dropped from his hands in astonishment unutterable, and in answer to my eager enquiries, all he could do was to point to them without having power to speak.

“ I took them up. You may imagine what were my exclamations and feelings upon seeing the note; but never can you picture to yourself the strong emotion with which I read these words—

“ *Les dons de l'amitié n'offensent jamais.**

“ W. S.”

“ Generous, feeling, delicate Somerset! Oh, my Clarentine, that I dared but give utterance to the wish that now rises to

* The gifts of friendship never offend.

my heart! There is but one other such mind as his in the world—and that she who possesses it may become sensible of his worth, and prove the sweet reward of all his virtues—Yes, Clarentine, *that*, that is the fervent wish of

“ Your own,
“ EUGENIE D’ARZELE.”

There was something in the nature of this letter so deeply affecting to a heart, which, like Clarentine’s was alive to every impression that a tale of generosity, or an action of beneficence can awaken, that, melted by its perusal into the most grateful tears she had ever shed, there was nothing upon earth she would not have given for permission to indulge, that evening, in uninterrupted privacy the sweet, though half melancholy reflections that filled her mind. The prospect of going out—of dissipating her thoughts amidst a set of uninteresting people from the subject that now so fully occupied them, was horror to her.

“ To wish, or even to attempt forgetting Somerset,” cried she, “ I am persuaded will henceforth be impossible! I

renounce all such visionary idea, and from this moment determine to cherish his remembrance at the risk of every thing—health, happiness, and peace. Careless whether he loves me in return, *my* love shall be wholly his: I wed myself to his image—it shall be my darling companion through life—the friend to whom, in fancy, I will repair for consolation, pour out all my sorrows, and dedicate every thought!”

Desperate now therefore, and indifferent what might in future be the effect upon her own mind of a resolution so fantastic and so wild, she concluded that in giving way to her imagination, in removing the severe curb she had hitherto put upon its wanderings, she should lighten her heart of half it had before suffered, and restore herself to ease and freedom. Somerset, she had not a doubt, loved another: to that other he was now, anxious and uncertain, in all probability gone. “Why let him go! and let him (she had almost added) be successful! My silent admiration can neither injure his more fortunate mistress, nor disturb him: he thinks me cold, regardless, and
indifferent.

indifferent. In ignorance therefore and in safety I may still nourish my attachment, and cheer myself at intervals, amidst the gloom that will surround me, with the soothing recollection of his excellence and worth!"

In this disposition of mind, and with a species of forced calmness, which, painful as it was to her to assume, yet in some measure bore the appearance of serenity, she set out for Mrs. Manners', unsuspected even by her penetrating friend, who accustomed to her being often absent, and ignorant of her having received any late letters, thought not of her present silence with any wonder, nor animadverted upon it with any thing but her usual good-humoured pleasantry.

In the ball room, one of the first persons who approached Clarentine, after she had paid her compliments to the ladies of the house, was Mr. Westbury. He began with something he intended should pass as an apology for his impertinence on the night of the former assembly; and then requesting the favour of her hand for the two first dances, on her bowing her

consent, almost mechanically, he fauntered back to his seat.

Very soon after, Mr. Manners, who at the moment she entered was conversing with some gentlemen in a distant part of the room, advanced towards her with the same petition. At first, so little did she know what she did, she was upon the point of accepting him; but suddenly recollecting herself, she hastily said, "O no, I can't; Mr. Westbury has just asked me."

"Poor Westbury!" exclaimed Mr. Manners, laughing—"He has no reason to be vain of the readiness with which you think of him!"

Then lowering his voice, and looking at her very archly, "I wonder," added he, "what you *are* thinking of? *Hope*, *Faith*, or *Charity*?"

Clarentine, certain he alluded again to the anchor, coloured; but affecting to laugh, said—"Of *Charity* certainly; or else I could never endure *you* so patiently."

"O pray then," cried he, "always retain this precious virtue when in my company, and I promise always to furnish
you

you with occasions to exercise it. All malice apart, however, will you do me the honour to go down the two *second* dances with me?"

Again Clarentine bowed; and Mr. Manners entreating her not to *forget* him, went up to speak to a fresh party that was just entering.

He had not left her many minutes, when a new candidate approached her in the person of the sententious Mr. Lea, who bowing to her with infinite ceremony, begged leave to propose himself to her as a partner during the commencement of their festive revels!

Clarentine, unused to such a mode of pleading, and surprised at the idea of a man's dancing at all who seemed verging towards sixty, drew back her hand with a look of grave astonishment, and not certain she had perfectly understood him, said, "Sir?"

"Madam," resumed he, "am I authorised to investigate into the number of your actual engagements? Can you vouchsafe me the"—

"Sir," interrupted Clarentine, extremely sickened of him, "I am already

engaged, I thank you, for the four first dances, and after they are over I shall go home immediately."

"I hope not," cried Mr. Lea, "I hope a lady whose physiognomy indicates such dulcet benignity, cannot meditate so direct a deviation from humanity?"

Clarentine, not in spirits to be amused by this conceit, repeated her first declaration with increased coldness, and Mr. Lea, at length, walked away.

The dancing now in a very short time began, and Clarentine, who in the languid Mr. Westbury felt by no means sorry to have a partner who would suffer to indulge her desire of being silent without interruption, was called to join in the set that was forming. Not long, however, had she reason to congratulate herself upon her good fortune; for scarcely had she been standing up five minutes, when Mr. Manners led a young lady whom he had engaged since her refusal, next couple to where she was placed, and seemed determined to draw her into conversation.

"Pray, Miss Delmington," said he, half laughing, "how could you have the cruelty to listen to the eloquent Mr. Lea
with

with such repulsive gravity? I watched you the whole time he was speaking to you, and really never saw any thing so petrifying as your countenance. What did he say to you, may I ask?"

"He talked to me, I believe," answered Clarentine negligently, "of the *dulcet benignity of my physiognomy!*"

Mr. Manners laughed heartily at this reply, and was proceeding to question her farther, when a servant approaching him said something in a low voice, and the next moment, apologizing to his partner for quitting her in an instant, he hastened out of the room.

Clarentine, relieved by this unexpected summons, and in no humour to begin any conversation with her unknown neighbours, was now permitted to go up the dance very quietly; and although she yet scarcely knew one step of the figure, was within two couples of the top, when, casting her eyes accidentally towards the door, she saw Mr. Manners re-enter the room, immediately followed by Captain Somerset!

An involuntary, but scarce audible exclamation of "Good God!" escaped

her; and changing colour, it was with difficulty she knew how to keep her place, or stammer out a faint excuse for the sudden start and ejaculation which had given rise, in her nearest neighbours, to so much astonishment.

Mean while Somerset, still following his friend, was introduced by him to his mother and sister, the latter of whom, after a short conversation, he led towards the dancers, and stood up with himself; whilst Mr. Manners, apparently much satisfied with this arrangement, returned to his former station, and, but that he was prevented by her being now obliged to begin the dance, seemed very much inclined to return likewise to his former amusement—questioning and observing Clarentine.

Never was a dance worse gone down, or a figure more miserably blundered. Mr. Westbury, as absent from airs and *ton* as Clarentine was from real agitation, affected as little to know what he was about as herself: and sometimes standing quite still, at others roughly, yet carelessly twisting every body round who came in his way, he made such a horrible confused business

business of it, that Clarentine, ashamed of the observation they both excited before they reached the bottom, entreated him to let her sit down, and without waiting for an answer ran to the first vacant seat she saw.

Persuaded now that Somerset either knew not that she was in the room, or forebore speaking to her through pique, she thought herself secure, in the remote corner to which she had retired, of not being noticed, and followed him with her eyes through the whole dance. Naturally well bred, and always extremely attentive to women, he conversed, she saw, occasionally with his lively partner; but with so little of his usual animation, and an air so absent, and even, for him, negligent, that it was evident his thoughts were widely wandering from the subjects he discussed, and scarcely permitted him to speak upon them with common presence of mind.

When the dance was concluded, and the ladies were all hastily flying to their seats, Somerset in passing Clarentine's to conduct Miss Manners to one near it, at length, saw and knew her. He stopped;
a deep

a deep glow instantly overspread his face, his eyes sparkled with delight, and unconsciously quitting his fair companion, he advanced eagerly towards her, saying, "Miss Delmington! and I not know she was here! not perceive her before!"

"That," replied Clarentine, forcing a smile, and attempting to speak with composure—"is by no means wonderful, as I have been sitting still during the greatest part of the dance."

Just then they were joined by Mr. Manners, who seemed purposely to have foreborn mentioning Clarentine to his friend for the malicious pleasure of witnessing the first effects of his surprise on beholding her.—

"Mr. Somerfet," said he, very gravely, "will you have the goodness to conclude one part of your business before you take any other in hand? My sister is waiting for you to find her a seat."

Somerfet looked a little disconcerted, but affecting to laugh, was actually going to repair his omission, when he perceived Miss Manners very composedly leaning back in a chair talking to some gentleman at the upper end of the room.

"Your

“Your sister,” cried he, turning round again, “is already placed,” then once more addressing Clarentine, “have you no wish,” said he, “to hear how I left your friends at Delmington, and *Mont Repos*?”

The mere name of the last-mentioned place made her colour by bringing to her mind the letter she had so lately received: however, she immediately said, “I hope they were all well?”

“Yes perfectly; indeed I think I never saw any of the party look better.”

“Does Lord Welwyn still intend coming to town next spring?”

“He seems determined upon it; there is *one* individual in that part of the world, however, who I fancy you will see yet sooner.”

“Sir Edgar do you mean?”

“No; his gay sister.”

“And what should bring her to town alone?”

“She will *not* come alone.”

“Good heaven, then, exclaimed Clarentine, “is she married?”

“O now,” cried Somersford, laughing, “you are a little too precipitate! No, she

she is not yet married, nor, I believe, aware of the danger she is in of soon being so; but appearances are strongly against her: she is really sometimes almost grave."

"If that," said Mr. Manners, who had hitherto listened in silence to this little dialogue, "is a symptom of impending matrimony, how soon we may expect to see Miss Delmington under some other name!"

"Is *she* then," asked Somerset, anxiously fixing her blushing face, "so very grave?"

"Grave! she is even taciturn, and so subject to *fits of absence*, she forgets almost every thing."

"I conclude," said the conscious Clarentine, addressing Somerset, "you know enough of Mr. Manners not to give implicit credit to all his ironical expressions?"

"O, if I thought Somerset doubted me," cried he, "I would give him a few *instances* directly!"

"No, pray don't trouble yourself, but let me hear what further Mr. Somerset has to say concerning Delmington."

"O, his distress on account of your reported gravity has put all that out of

his head! you'll get nothing more from him, Miss Delmington, unless, when he has recovered his consternation a little, you chuse to take him for your partner, during the two next dances, instead of me."

"Setting aside all personal vanity," cried Somerset, "upon my word, Miss Delmington, I think you will profit by the exchange, since at least, in me, you will be secure of not finding a tormentor."

"I accept the offer then," said Clarentine, (and she never spoke more truly!) "with gratitude."

Somerset bowed his thanks, and *looked* them yet more expressively; whilst Mr. Manners, leaning down, said to her in a low voice—"This, I think, is the *first* time I have ever been so fortunate as to do any thing you sincerely approved?"

"I hope, at least," said Clarentine, endeavouring to rally, "it will not be the *last*."—and then, seeing young Westbury advancing towards her, she arose, and once more accompanied him to the dancers.

Somerset's looks, his voice, his manner of addressing her, operated upon Clarentine

rentine with the force of enchantment, and dispelled insensibly, but entirely, the thoughtfulness and dejection that had rendered her so indifferent to every thing during the early part of the evening. Restored to all her natural cheerfulness and vivacity, no cloud sat now upon her brow, no sadness oppressed her heart; but re-animated by the mere pleasure, after so long an absence, of again beholding him, a smile of innocent gladness played upon her lips, and an expression of delight beamed in her eyes.

Heedless, therefore, how her insipid partner acquitted himself, she went down the dance with a lightness and activity that appeared no less to shock and confound him, than it amused the observant Mr. Manners, who following her, when, breathless but not dispirited, she went back to her seat, said, with a look more than usually provoking—"I really begin to think, Miss Delmington, I shall not have fortitude sufficient to renounce my prior claim. You went down this last dance so admirably, seeming '*to rise from the ground like a feather'd Mercury*', that I could have dashed my head against the wall

wall for very madness, at the idea of having been blockheadly enough to give you up!—Come,” added he, “be generous and accept me again: I dare say Somerset will be perfectly content to go on with my sister.”

“Mr. Somerset,” said Clarentine, a little drily, “may go on with whom he pleases, but at all events, I look upon the engagement, Sir, between you and me as dissolved, and must beg you will excuse my renewing it.”

“Good God, then why did you dance this last time so provokingly well, and the first so languidly ill? I really thought you had been indisposed, and did not wish to stand up.”

“And with that idea you imagined it was doing your friend a great favour to consign me over to him!”

“O, I could not tell what change *his* powers of entertainment might produce, and hoped he would enliven and revive you; *mine* I distrusted.”

“And indeed you did well, for I think if I was to listen to you much longer you would make me completely low-spirited!”

“*Le*

“ *Le compliment est gallant !*” cried he, laughing.

“ I am afraid *not* ;” said Clarentine, “ but really you fulfil your promise, or rather your threat so literally, that you sometimes exercise my patience too much.”

“ I find then,” cried Mr. Manners, you reserve your *dulcet benignity* for the fortunate Mr. Lea ; at least you seemed infinitely more patient with him than ever you are with me.”

“ *He* only wearied—*you* purposely provoked me.”

“ O there’s no harm in that, since at any time I had rather be said to partake of the nature of a provocative than a soporific !”

Here Miss Manners advanced towards them, to entreat Clarentine would make one in a set that was going to be formed for dancing a reel—“ Nay don’t look shy,” added she, seeing her shrink from the idea of so public an exhibition, “ you won’t be at all conspicuous, for I hope to get enough to make a double set.” And then taking her hand, and drawing her away, she allowed her no time either for hesitation or objection.

Dancing

Dancing among the liveliest and the most airy young people in the room, Clarentine, to her utter consternation, now beheld the profound and scientific Mr. Lea, affecting all the alertness and vivacity of a youth, with all the sober symptoms in his countenance of a man bordering upon his grand climacteric. Not having been able to procure a partner to his taste (he was a great admirer of youth and beauty) for the country dances, he had, at last, thrust himself into one of the reels, and much to his own satisfaction, and yet more to the amusement of every sitting miss in the room, was displaying all his attitudes and graces to infinite advantage.

The moment the dance was over, a young lady, who as well as Clarentine, had been engaged in it, flew after her as she was returning to her seat, and eagerly called out—"Lord, Miss Delmington, can you possibly tell who that droll little old man is, who has been smirking and skipping away with us so oddly?"

"No," answered Clarentine, smiling,
"I know nothing more of him than his
name ;

name ; but here comes Mr. Manners, who can perhaps give you better information.

To Mr. Manners, therefore, the fair enquirer next applied, who with great solemnity assured her Mr. Lea was a gallant batchelor, with a large fortune, and very much worth captivating by any single lady who might be allured by his appearance.

“ *He rich ?*” cried she, with a look of contempt—“ Dear, that’s impossible ; he’s got the shabbiest coat on I ever saw in my life.”

“ You must not judge of *male Grecian* by their dress ;” said Mr. Manners, “ it should be left to the modern *female Grecian* to distinguish themselves in that way !”

“ Lord, what don’t you like the present style of dress ?”

“ It renders you so fascinating, that I am afraid of liking it *too* well.”

Satisfied with this little compliment, the pretty *Grecian* then tripped away.

When she was gone—“ Is it really true Mr. Manners,” said Clarentine, “ that Mr. Lea is what you told us—a man of fortune ?”

“ Yes

“ Yes, upon my honour, have you any designs in consequence ?”

“ I think he would make an excellent husband for Mrs. Westbury.”

“ O no, they are too much alike.”

“ Don’t you approve then of a similarity of dispositions and pursuits between married people ?”

“ Not to too great an extent : it either engenders a spirit of rivalry and contention between them, or makes them completely *fade* and mawkish, always echoing to each other the same unmeaning “yes, my dear,” and “no, my dear.”

Somerfet, who, during the reel had been talking in the card-room with Mrs. Denbigh, now approached to claim his ready partner. Mr. Manners affected to resign her with the most violent murmurings, but at length, suffering her to go, said he would guard her seat during her absence, finding it impossible to dance again after making such a sacrifice.

Whilst they stood up, before they were too much engaged in the dance to be able to converse, Clarentine and Somerfet, with apparently equal pleasure, renewed their discourse upon the subject of Del-
mington

mington and its neighbourhood. He confirmed what he had already hinted of the mutual partiality of Eltham and Sophia; and said, that from the very great satisfaction with which Lord Welwyn seemed to observe it, he had not a doubt of his giving the readiest concurrence to the match. "Lady Delmington, however," added he, "like an anxious and tender mother, is evidently in some little alarm (Mr. Eltham not having yet declared himself) for her daughter's tranquillity and happiness. She knows not how to refuse him admittance, and yet his daily visits, I saw, gave her uneasiness: she thinks him insinuating and agreeable, and should he now fly off, I fear, judges very rightly that poor Sophia's gaiety would fly off with him."

"Ah, how cruel it would be in any man," cried Clarentine, earnestly, "to destroy a gaiety so innocent and playful! —I could never forgive Mr Eltham if he was the cause of doing this by my excellent Sophia!"

"I sincerely believe," cried Somerset, "he has no such design, and his uncle appears convinced of it."

Clarentine

Clarentine was very anxious to know, how, on their first meeting, Eltham had behaved to Somerset; but before she had gained courage to attempt any indirect inquiry, he changed the subject, and asked her when she thought of leaving Bath—

“We go to-morrow,” answered she.

“To-morrow?” repeated Somerset. “Do you indeed? And how, Miss Delamington, after all the gaiety in which you have here been engaged, will you be able to endure the privacy and retirement of Mr. Lenham’s house?”

“Shall I gain credit,” replied she, smiling, “if I tell you that all this dissipation has wearied me, and that I shall rejoice on being restored to my former way of life?”

“Yes,” cried he, warmly, “credit of every description!”

They were now interrupted by being obliged to join in the dance, during the rest of which they had very little opportunity for continuing the conversation.

When Clarentine moved towards her seat, Mr. Manners, she found, had kept his word, and guarded it for her most

strictly. On seeing her advance, he instantly yielded it; but chusing to station himself by her side, nothing further was said but upon general subjects, and at the end of her second dance with Somerset, Mrs. Denbigh called her to go home.

“At what hour in the morning,” said Somerset, as he led her out, “do you set off?”

“At nine o’clock, I believe.”

“And will you allow me to breakfast with you before you go?”

“Certainly!”

“Good night then, dearest Miss Delmington,” cried he, gently pressing her hand.

“Good night,” repeated Clarentine; and jumping into the coach, it immediately drove off.

Seldom, even in the earliest and happiest period of her life had the heart of Clarentine felt more easy, more completely satisfied, than it did on her return from this ball. In the absence of Mrs. Hertford, to have seen, to have conversed and spent the whole evening with Somerset, was to her a gratification so unexpected, so new, and so superior to all others,

others, that she felt as if it had repaid her for every inquietude she had lately endured. What could have brought him so suddenly to Bath she neither found it possible to divine, nor thought it much worth her while to conjecture; it was sufficient for her that he *was* there—that she should again behold him the following day—and that he still, notwithstanding the coldness of his letter, seemed to think of her with regard. There were intervals, when recollecting the motive which he had told Madame d'Arzele carried him from Delmington, she faintly whispered to her own heart, that it might perhaps be to investigate *her* sentiments he was come: afraid, however, of long indulging such an idea, she endeavoured to drive from her mind all anticipation of the future, and to rest her thoughts, contented and thankful, upon the serenity of the present.

Mrs. Denbigh, before they separated for the night, observing the unwonted vivacity that danced in her eyes, and the cheerfulness, as well of her conversation, as the very tone of her voice, congratulated her archly upon the change, and very earnestly requested to know what

could *possibly* have occasioned it? Clarentine blushed and laughed, but ventured not to rally in return; and soon after went up to her own room.

C H A P. XXII.

BEFORE Clarentine had quite completed her packing the next morning, word was brought her that Captain Somerset was below. The glad tidings no sooner reached her, than dispatching what else remained to be done with all the quickness her half-trembling hands would allow, she ran down stairs to receive him.

A bright glow animated her whole countenance as she entered, and in a chearful voice she called out—"You would teach us to keep early hours, Mr. Somerset, were you often to breakfast with us?"

"I should be happy," said he, taking her hand and gazing delightedly at her,

“to teach you any thing that has the power of making you look so well.”

Clarentine was too conscious of the emotion which had occasioned these good looks, to receive this compliment entirely without embarrassment; changing the subject therefore directly, she withdrew her hand, and as she seated herself, said—
“I am afraid, as Mrs. Denbigh is not yet ready, it will be rather late before we have done breakfast and can set out.”

“I hope, however, if it should,” cried he, “you will think your escort strong enough to banish all alarm.”

Clarentine looked surprised, and Somerset watching her countenance whilst he spoke, added—“You will not, I flatter myself, Miss Delmington, oppose my intention of attending you in a separate chaise to London?”

“Scarcely able to conceal the pleasure this intimation gave her, Clarentine cast down her eyes, and in a low voice answered—“No, certainly—if you—if it was your design to leave Bath so soon.”

“I had but one reason for visiting Bath at all,” cried he, “and that cannot be

answered by my now making any longer stay at it."

Uncertain how she ought to understand these words, and desirous, at least, that he should not suppose she applied them to herself, Clarentine now said—

"Is Mr. Manners also going to town?"

"I believe not."

"If so, you have surely made him a very short visit?"

"I do not think he appropriates any part of it to himself."

Clarentine now rose up, and moving towards the breakfast table, said with a half smile—"You are quite enigmatical this morning, Mr. Somerset, I am not at all equal to comprehending you." And then begging him to ring the bell, she busied herself in preparing the things for making tea.

Somerset, without attending to her request, or seeming to hear it, was approaching her and beginning to speak again, when the door opened, and Mrs. Denbigh appeared. He bit his lips, and immediately retreating, bowed to her from the place where he had before stood, but seemed unable to utter a word.

Mrs.

Mrs. Denbigh finding them both thus mute (for Clarentine, from the instant he had advanced, had felt a degree of agitation that now rendered her as incapable of speaking as himself), at length said with a laugh—"How long has this reciprocal silence lasted—and how much longer *is* it to last?"

Somerfet recovering first, with a forced smile, answered—"Attribute it to *me*, Madam; Miss Delmington accused me when I *did* speak of doing it so unintelligibly, that I not only became fearful of attempting it again, but communicated to her a share of my own taciturnity."

"Mysteriousness seems to be a reigning fashion," said Mrs. Denbigh, "among the young men of the present day; your friend Mr. Manners is so incomprehensible sometimes, that he sat here talking to us a quarter of an hour the other morning without its being possible for either Clarentine or me to understand one word he said."

Then turning to her—"Have you made the tea, my dear? We shall be very late, I fear."

Clarentine, relieved by this change of conversation, repeated her request to Somerset that he would ring the bell, and soon after, the servant bringing up the water, they went to breakfast.

At the appointed time the chaise Mrs. Denbigh had ordered was at the door, and the next minute a second, attended by one of Somerset's servants on horseback, drove up likewise.

"Why, pray," said Mrs. Denbigh, as she was passing the window, "what are we to do with *two* chaises? and whose servant is that?"

Somerset then informed her of his design of accompanying them.

"Oh, you go with us Sir, do you? Then let me beg your postilion may take the lead, that in case we are stopped, the robbers may get the richest booty first, and afterwards come to us in good humour."

"Ah, Madam," cried Somerset, "they would think no prize so precious as that your chaise will contain."

"Umph!—Was that compliment addressed to the beauties of *my person*, or the charms of *Clarentine's mind*?"

"We

“ We will divide it between us,” cried Clarentine, “ and each take our share as well of what belongs to the person as the mind.”

During this time the servants had been busied in cording the trunks behind the chaise, and arranging every thing preparatory to their setting out. When this was done, Mrs. Denbigh’s man came to announce its being ready, and Somerset, assisting her and Clarentine to enter it, bade them farewell till they met at dinner, and hastening to his own solitary vehicle, got into it and drove after them.

“ Well, my young friend,” said Mrs. Denbigh, after they had rode on some time in silence, “ does your heart feel as light just now, as your countenance looks complacent? It is a very agreeable thing, don’t you allow, to travel at one’s ease under safe and pleasant convoy, and to have it in one’s power, in case of accident, to make signals to the *guard-ship*, and call it up in a moment?”

“ Yes,” answered Clarentine, laughing, “ very agreeable.”

“ Spoken out like an honest, good girl!” cried Mrs. Denbigh. But pray

now, tell me what brought our protector to Bath so opportunely?"

"Indeed, Madam, I know no more than yourself."

"You did not expect to see him when you went to the ball last night?"

"No, certainly."

"Has he yet spoken to you of Mrs. Hertford at all?"

"Not one word."

"Should you have any objection to my asking him, as cautiously as I can, a few questions concerning her?"

Clarentine hesitated a moment, but at length said—"If you will have the goodness to make your enquiries when I am not present, none in the world."

"Very well then, I shall set about it as soon as we arrive at the inn, if I can find an opportunity."

Clarentine now infinitely better fitted to relate such an anecdote with composure than she had been the preceding day, communicated to Mrs. Denbigh the truly generous action she had heard of Somerset from Madam d'Arzele. The story made that lady's eyes glisten with tears, and became,

came the subject of their conversation during the greatest part of the morning.

Amongst other things—"I have long known," said Mrs. Denbigh, "this youthful guardian of yours, and long believed that, 'take him for all in all,' there does not exist a man upon earth with a more noble spirit, or a kinder heart; these virtues, however, and the conciliating gentleness of his manners, make him but the more dangerous where he is beloved without a certainty of return; and I could almost regret, immediately after your having heard of him such an account, that he had not taken it into his head to go any where rather than where you could meet him."

"Oh, dearest Madam," cried Clarentine, "harbour not such a regret! His presence has composed, has soothed and been more beneficial to me than I have power to describe. I have now brought myself to such a state of mind, that I have no longer any expectations, and I believe shall be affected by no disappointment; to see him as a friend is all I wish, and—"

“ Pooh, pooh! you are talking romance and platonism to me again! Be firm and resolute, Clarentine, and either determine to avoid seeing him in future at all, or endeavour to assure yourself you can see him upon some less delusive system.”

“ Endeavour to assure myself!” repeated Clarentine, a little dismayed—
“ Good Heaven, Madam, how would you have me effect this?”

“ You sent off Mr. Eltham for dangle idly after you, and not declaring himself: send Mr. Somerset off for the same reason.”

“ Dear Madam, can the attention he pays me be called *dangle*? Does it at all resemble Mr. Eltham’s? And is he not much more authorised to pay it in his double connection of guardian and relation?”

“ If that attention was not destructive to your peace, I should say he was: but, Clarentine, do you believe you can ever persuade me it will be possible for you to return to common sense whilst you are hourly receiving it without knowing the design with which it is paid? A young
woman

woman should either be very certain of the mutual affection of a man she loves, or sedulously renounce his society, since absence, as your friend Sophia says, is the only cure for ill-placed partiality."

"I did not find," said Clarentine, suppressing a sigh, "that my cure had made any great progress during the two months we staid at Bath."

"*Two* months! *six* months, my dear child, would scarcely be enough to eradicate *your* complaint! You have indulged it, as if you apprehended the recovery would be worse than the disease. However, I will say no more upon the subject just now; you have got into a sort of fool's paradise (pardon the expression) from which it is almost pity to recal you; and so here, for the present, ends my lecture."

She then began talking of indifferent things.

During the remainder of that day's journey nothing material occurred: Mrs. Denbigh had no opportunity of making the enquiries she meditated, nor had Somerset any of speaking to Clarentine apart. They all appeared chearful and happy when they met; spent the evening
in

in perfect harmony, and separated at night in unabated good spirits.

The next morning, about a quarter of an hour before they left the inn at which they slept, Mrs. Denbigh calling after Somerset, as he was leaving the room to give some orders to his servant, begged him to shew her a letter he had promised to let her read from Mr. Lenham, containing some public news they had been talking over during breakfast. Somerset, hastily feeling in his pocket as he stood with the door half open in his hand, delivered the letter to Clarentine, who just then happened to pass him, and saying, "Will you have the goodness to give it to Mrs. Denbigh?" ran away, expecting the chaises would be announced every minute.

Mrs. Denbigh opened it as soon as he was gone, whilst Clarentine, not knowing how to fill up so comfortable an interval, traversed the room with listless steps, stopping from time to time to observe what was passing in the inn yard, and then renewing her walk.

In less than ten minutes Somerset returned, and Mrs. Denbigh gravely folding
ing

ing up the letter, presented it to him with great formality, and said, "Thank you, Sir, for the perusal of *this*: will you now be so obliging as to favour me with a sight of what Mr. Lenham writes?"

Somerfet stared at first without comprehending her, but the next moment, casting his eyes upon the direction, eagerly seized it, and, colouring very high, said in great confusion, "I beg your pardon—it was a mistake—this," taking another letter from his pocket, "is what I intended, Madam, to shew you."

"I would advise you in future," said Mrs. Denbigh, rather drily, "to be more careful: these *mistakes* may sometimes be a little awkward."

Clarentine, during this short dialogue, had stood at the window looking first at one, then at the other, with the utmost surprise and perplexity. She would have given the world to know with certainty whose the letter was, suspecting by Somerfet's embarrassment it could be from no other than Mrs. Hertford: not having courage, however, to hazard the least enquiry, even in raillery, she turned away on perceiving Somerfet was looking at her,

her, and felt truly rejoiced when a few minutes afterwards they were summoned to depart.

When the chaise drove on, unable any longer to repress her curiosity—

“ Was that letter, Madam,” said she to Mrs. Denbigh, affecting to speak with indifference, “ from a female correspondent ?”

“ No, from a flighty and impertinent male one.”

“ I did not suspect Mr. Somerset of having any of that description.”

“ Then you gave him more credit than he deserved.”

“ May I ask,” resumed Clarentine, hesitatingly, “ who ?”

“ You had better,” interrupted Mrs. Denbigh, “ not ask any thing about the matter, my dear, for it could give you no pleasure to hear an account either of the subject or the style.”

“ Dear Madam, did it contain any thing that related to me ?”

“ I see your curiosity is upon the rack, and therefore till it is gratified it would be vain, I suppose, to expect any rest.

Know

Know then, my dear child, that the letter is from Mr. Manners."

"Mr. Manners," repeated Clarentine, blushing—"Ah! then its contents, I fear, may be too well guessed!"

"Certain it is, at least," resumed Mrs. Denbigh, "that he appears to have guessed *you* very thoroughly! He writes from Bath, some days after his return from Northamptonshire, and begins by reproaching his friend for denying his attachment to Mrs. Hertford, and yet persisting so ungratefully in avoiding you. He relates to him, in confirmation of what he seems to have told him before of your partiality, the little anecdote of the *anchor*, upon which, and upon your blushes and confusion at the moment he found it, he lays great stress, not doubting, I believe, its being Somerset's gift. Numberless other trifling circumstances he brings forward in support of his opinion; and concludes, after a long and very animated panegyric of you, by urging his friend, very strenuously, to renounce all connection with that viper, as he is pleased to call her, Mrs. Hertford, of whom he affirms to have heard an exceeding

ing

ing equivocal character, and presses him to hasten immediately to Bath, to restore bloom to the cheeks, and happiness to the gentle bosom, of the fair and too-tender Clarentine !”

Thunderstruck by this mortifying detail, shocked to find she had thus cruelly exposed herself not only to Mr. Manners, but, through him, to Somerset likewise, Clarentine, drowned in tears, and incapable of interrupting a relation, every word of which was a dagger to her heart, now alarmed Mrs. Denbigh so much by the almost convulsive sobs which escaped her, that reproaching herself for the facility with which she had yielded to her desire of information, she attempted—but for some time attempted in vain—to soothe and compose her by every argument she could devise.

When at length, however, the distressed girl had somewhat recovered, and was able to speak, “ Oh ! dearest Mrs. Denbigh,” cried she, hiding her face upon her shoulder, “ how am I ever to meet Mr. Somerset again ? Indeed, indeed, I cannot bear to think of it ! He will know you have reported to me every word of that
hateful

hateful letter, and from my looks will endeavour to discover the truth of its contents. Where can I conceal my consciousness and my shame?"

Mrs. Denbigh, to calm her a little, then told her, that upon pretence of fatigue and indisposition she might, when they stopped to dine, retire to a private room, and have some refreshment sent her, without appearing at their meal at all. Clarentine most eagerly embraced this proposal, and thanking Mrs. Denbigh a thousand times for her considerate kindness in making it, recurred the next minute, once again, to the subject of the letter.

"It was *pity* then," cried she, "pity for my self-betrayed weakness and folly, that brought Mr. Somerset to Bath! His love for Mrs. Hertford may not, nay, probably *is* not, at all diminished, notwithstanding the sacrifice his friend's urgency in my behalf might, perhaps, from motives of generosity, impell him to make. Oh, dearest Madam! if you have any compassion, any regard for me, endeavour to undeceive—or rather, alas! to mislead him with respect to my real sentiments!

Tell

Tell him, I conjure you, that Mr. Manners was in an error ; that to any feelings of the nature he suspected no part of my conduct was to be attributed ; restore him, in short, to the full liberty he before enjoyed, and never let me undergo the deep humiliation of being supposed so strongly infatuated, that nothing less than the extorted and reluctant vows of the man I love can save or restore me !”

“ My dearest Clarentine,” cried Mrs. Denbigh, who now saw her sufficiently revived to bear a little raillery, “ you are always either upon stilts or upon crutches ! Be a little rational, and give me no commissions of this sublime, but lying kind. In the first place, without knowing the true nature of Somerset’s attachment to you, it would be madness supreme to tell the poor man you abhor—you can’t endure him—you wish him every evil under Heaven ! Such things are never said by moderate and civil girls ! In the next place, to oblige you, were I even to stretch a point, and falsify my conscience so grossly, it is a thousand to one, whether, after what he has heard, he would take me for any thing but a superannuated

annuated dotard, telling fibs *pour mon bon plaisir*, and meddling in what does not concern me. All I mean to do, therefore, is to listen quietly to the explanation he will, no doubt, be himself solicitous to enter upon, and to report it to you faithfully and exactly. An old woman who does not wish to be stiled a *match-maker* or a *match-breaker*, can, in honour, do no more."

When the chaise stopped, and Somerset, hastily alighting from his own, advanced to hand the two ladies out, unlike the smiling readiness with which she had accepted his services the day before, Clarentine shrunk back when he would have assisted her, and without looking at him, jumping off the step, ran into the house, and up stairs in a moment; leaving to Mrs. Denbigh the care of apologizing for her, and sending some one to shew her to a chamber."

Confounded at her abrupt flight, Somerset silently followed Mrs. Denbigh into a parlour, where, grave and dejected, he threw himself into a chair near the door, seeming hardly conscious that any one was in the room. Mrs. Denbigh observed

served him some time without interrupting his reverie: at length—

“ Miss Delmington,” said she, “ is fatigued with her journey, and not very well to-day: she has retired to lie down.”

“ Not well?” repeated Somerfet, with a look of anxiety, “ I am grieved to hear it; and yet,” added he, hesitating, “ almost selfish enough to feel, in hearing it, a species of relief.”

“ You imputed her silence, perhaps, to a wrong cause?”

“ I hope I did: Mrs. Denbigh could never have the cruelty to communicate to her the purport of that fatal letter?”

“ I communicated it,” said Mrs. Denbigh, “ to obviate a suspicion of something worse: she might have thought, you know, it was a challenge, or a letter from a *dun*—or something very disgraceful indeed!”

Somerfet now starting from his seat in great agitation, exclaimed—

“ Good God! you have *really* acquainted her with its contents! Ah! then, her coldness is but too well explained! She must think me the most
vain

vain and credulous of men, and will fly my fight as an object of detestation!"

"No, not quite so bad as that, we'll hope:—she certainly does not wish to see you just now, but when she gets over the first shock, her anger will chiefly rest where it is most due—with Mr. Manners?"

"Manners has voluntarily and doubly imposed upon *himself*," cried Somerset, "and endeavoured to impose upon *others*, in a way it gives me the utmost pain to think of.—With regard to myself, he has persecuted me with exhortations and remonstrances no less unnecessary, than, upon such a subject, they were extraordinary: the error he fell into with respect to Miss Delmington, though I dare not trust myself to expatiate upon it, is of a nature that has been yet more pernicious to me, and may be one of those, which, in its consequences, I shall have cause to rue whilst I exist!"

"I do not perfectly understand you, Sir," said Mrs. Denbigh, "what error relating to yourself, do you allude to? Is it possible that his suspicions concerning Mrs. Hertford—"

She

She hesitated; but Somerfet, easily comprehending her meaning, exclaimed—

“ Ah, Madam! have you also given them admittance? Have my true feelings been so little known to you that they remain yet to be explained?” Mrs. Hertford,” added he, “ has been to me no more than a friend from the first hour I saw her: I thought her worthy, I believed her amiable and sincere; she wrung from me the real secret of my heart, and her dissembled pity, her artificial softness, soothed and flattered me. Whatever the sentiments were she sought to persuade me I had excited in her breast, she well knew my power of returning was passed. Still, however, her gentleness, her apparent interest in my happiness continued: she made herself a sort of barrier between me and misery; and the seeming generosity with which, at the same time that she was hourly insinuating to me her own partiality, she extolled and applauded her lovely precursor, deceived me so egregiously, that I firmly supposed her one of the best, as she appeared one of the most candid of human beings.”

“ And

“ And what late reason have you had,” said Mrs. Denbigh, “ to change your opinion ?”

“ Reason too incontrovertible,” replied he, “ to be disputed. Subtle and designing as she is, and guarded as in all her measures she has generally been, she was not, however, quite exempted from the vanity and weakness which often leads politicians to commit indiscretions: she made herself a confidant; and less from openness of heart than from the desire of obtaining admiration and praise for her ingenuity, revealed all her secret machinations to a female friend who has betrayed her. From that friend—a Mrs. Castleton—who she has unwarily, but deeply offended, I received, the day before I left Delmington, a packet of letters, including one from herself, which contains an abstract of Mrs. Hertford’s life, and a number of others, written to her by that very lady, within these last three months. The first of these sufficiently told me what was the nature of the others; I read therefore only one of them, and turned from the rest with disgust and horror. Good

God! what a train of artifice and deception did it reveal to me! I could not, but that I saw and knew the hand to be that of the unprincipled projector—I could not have believed that such determined hypocrisy, such unfeeling selfishness, existed upon earth! To have been made the dupe myself of her insincerity, I am vain enough to think, argues nothing to my disparagement: sorry should I be ever to find myself a match for such consummate duplicity. There were passages, however, in the letter, that made my blood boil with indignation! They discovered to me that she had not only deceived Miss Delmington in regard to my sentiments, (a circumstance which, unimportant as it may be to *her*, yet to me is deeply mortifying) but that pains had also been taken to infuse into her mind a belief, that I was coxcomb enough to credit the pretended insinuations Mrs. Hertford had given me of her attachment. In the first place, such insinuations never escaped her; and in the next, Miss Delmington may be assured, if they *had*, I am not of a disposition

a disposition so lightly to imbibe conceit, or so easily to admit presumption."

Mrs. Denbigh, at the conclusion of this speech, lifting up her hands and eyes with consternation and amazement, exclaimed, "Is it possible,—good Heaven, is it possible, that in so young a mind such perfidy and deceit should be lodged! Your account, Mr. Somerset, makes me tremble, and rejoiced as I am at our general escape from so worthless a woman, I am yet shocked to be obliged to believe a character like her's exists!"

Then pausing a moment, she presently added in a lower voice, speaking to herself—"My poor Clarentine! How could I be cruel enough to blame your virtuous indignation, to discredit your too just suspicions!"

Somerset, who had caught the name of Clarentine, and involuntarily listened to what followed, now said, "Dear Mrs. Denbigh, what suspicions do you mean? Why do you speak in a voice of such concern?"

Mrs. Denbigh had no time to answer him, for just then the servants entered with dinner.

Little was said whilst they were at table: Somerset's heart, and Mrs. Denbigh's mind, were too full to allow them to converse upon indifferent subjects, and whilst the attendants were in the room, it was impossible to pursue that which had before engrossed them.

When once more, however, they were alone—"I will not," said Mrs. Denbigh, "so far betray my trust, Captain Somerset, as to impart to you the *whole* of what I know; but this, for your present satisfaction, I have no scruple in telling you, Clarentine's opinion of Mrs. Hertford has long been such, that after the first moment, she never gave credit to the presumption, if you are pleased to call it so, which that lady sought to impute to you. She esteems you too sincerely to believe any thing to your prejudice; and I am certain, has no desire so earnest as to retain your good opinion, and prove to you her own. I must insist upon it, however, that you do not, at this time, either attempt to speak with her alone, or to converse with her upon any but general topics: her mind is not in a state to bear immediate scrutiny; it has for
a considerable

a considerable period been so cruelly harrassed, that it may truly be said to have been thoroughly unhinged. The intelligence I have to give her, however, you may rest assured, will afford her pleasure, in proportion to the just aversion she has long had for Mrs. Hertford, and the cordial regard she acknowledges for you."

Somerfet, revived and enchanted by this friendly speech, promised implicit submission to the two injunctions it contained; and forbearing to extend his enquiries, eager and impatient as he was to know the *whole* that had been alluded to, suffered Mrs. Denbigh to leave him and go up to her young friend.

C H A P. XXIII.

“WELL, my dear Clarentine,” cried Mrs. Denbigh, in a tone of cheerfulness as she opened the door—“our explanation is over, and your Somerfet, your friend, is honourably acquitted.”

“Dear Madam,” cried Clarentine, her cheeks tinged with a vivid glow—“explain yourself, I entreat!”—

“I will; but you must promise me first to behave reasonably during the rest of the day; to meet him with good-humour, and to answer him, when next he speaks to you.”

“Ah Madam, do you think, if I hear of him as favourable an account as you teach me to expect, I shall require such an exhortation?”

“Why I don’t know; you may expect more, perhaps, than I have power to tell, or”—

Here Clarentine interrupted her, and too impatient for longer delay, besought her most earnestly to begin her relation.

Mrs.

Mrs. Denbigh, tho' always composed and tranquil herself, could yet make allowances for an impetuosity so natural at such a moment, and too kind to lengthen her suspense, entered upon the promised vindication immediately.

The predominant sensation with which Clarentine listened to a confirmation so undeniable of the selfishness and dissimulation she had long suspected, was horror mixed with thankfulness for the providential deliverance of a man so ill formed to cope with such artificial double-dealing. Too generous, however, to exult over a fallen enemy, to accumulate the measure of her errors by illiberal animadversions, or to add invective to contempt, she heard the whole account, tho' not in astonishment, yet in determined silence, and when it concluded, permitted not herself to utter a single comment upon any part of it.

Much, however, remained for her still to learn; Mrs. Denbigh had hitherto confined herself wholly to the subject of Mrs. Hertford; she now spoke to her of Somerset himself—of his avowed affection—his modest apprehensions, and the con-

siderate delicacy with which he had abstained from enlarging on the *Memoirs* Mrs. Castleton had sent him, and from particularizing any peculiar instance of treachery relating to himself in the detestable correspondence that had been remitted to him."

"We may well suppose, however," added she, "what were the designs that correspondence disclosed, by the determined antipathy against Mrs. Hertford with which it seems to have inspired him. I doubt not but that it discovered to him, in their fullest extent, the mercenary views that seem to have actuated her; nor do I doubt at the same time, but that every page was fraught with triumphant anticipations of certain success. It is plain she never loved him: no woman truly attached writes of a lover to a friend in a style it would be prejudicial to her he should see: even where stratagems are employed to win that lover, if they are resorted to merely from motives of tenderness, a man forgives the *effect* in the *cause*, and though he flights the mistress, is flattered by the fondness. Not such is here the case: cold-blooded, heartless

heartless policy seems to have been her only guide; and without one of the excuses that might be found for a woman of ardent imagination and strong passions, she has run, I begin to think, into all the intrigue that usually proceeds from jealousy and apprehension. I shall beg, however, to see the correspondence, since, shrewdly as I have descanted upon its supposed tenour, I must acknowledge myself to be by no means sufficiently *au fait* in all these intricacies of deception to have yet acquired any distinct idea of her plans or her motives."

"Dearest Mrs. Denbigh," cried Clarentine, "why should you wish to fully your mind by an inspection so uninteresting and really so horrid? As for me, I am perfectly content to know there are such beings as coquettes in the world, without wishing to dive so deep into their hearts. Mrs. Hertford is detected, is betrayed; ah, then, let her faults rest in peace!"

"My dear child, this is all very well for you to say, and you to think—but let me, I entreat, derive what amusement I can from a detail so new, and I doubt

not so instructive. I have no apprehension of being turned into a *coquette*, and as I never read Machiavel in my youth, am determined to study his modern archetype in my old age. I dare say I shall find it an exceeding entertaining pastime in a post-chaise; and I am persuaded Mr. Somerset will most readily resign the whole budget, for he seems to have as great a horror of it as yourself."

Then rising up—"Here comes the chaise," added Mrs. Denbigh, "I have no time to lose therefore in applying for these same letters. Will you go down with me, or wait here till I send you word we are ready to set out?"

"I will wait here, if you please, Madam."

Mrs. Denbigh, upon this, immediately left her, and returning to the parlour—"Mr. Somerset," cried she, "have you got Mrs. Hertford's system of politics with you?"

Somerset smiled, and answered he had.

"And may I ask to see it?"

"Most assuredly," and ringing the bell, he delivered to his servant a key, and directed him "where to find the whole packet.

"Well,"

“Well,” said Mrs. Denbigh, as she received it—“you may expect, after such a perusal, to find in me some very extraordinary improvement. The opacity of my intellects (as Mr. Lea would say) wanted a little subtilization, for I never could invent an ingenious plot in my life: this, I hope, will enable me to set up for a contriver through life. As for Clarentine, poor simple soul! she protests against reading a single line of it; should I, notwithstanding, meet with any *very* valuable instructions, any particular good receipt for making a female deceiver, I shall certainly communicate it to her directly.”

“You are really too kind to her!” cried Somerset, laughing; “I have no apprehension, however, of her profiting by such lessons.”

Mrs. Denbigh now moved towards the door to depart, and Clarentine, hastening down upon the first summons, was detained by Somerset a moment at the door to enquire after her health, and then handed into the chaise which immediately drove away.

Mrs. Denbigh, affecting more eagerness than she really felt, opened the packet as soon as she was seated, and began reading immediately; whilst Clarentine had recourse to a book she had the day before put into one of the chaise-pockets.

The first amongst these curious manuscripts which Mrs. Denbigh chose to select was Mrs. Castleton's own letter. The early part of it, containing the bitterest general accusations against her *friend*, she read very quietly; but when she came to particulars—such as the story of young Godfrey's disappointment, and the subsequent elopement with Eltham, she could contain herself no longer.—“Merciful powers!” exclaimed she, with a mixture in her countenance of risibility and dismay, “Eltham might well despise this unhappy woman! might well caution you against her! why she jilted another man first, and then ran away with him to Scotland before he was nineteen!”

Clarentine, less surprised than shocked, said, “It had been well for Mrs. Hertford, if, in this treacherous and abominable *friend*, she had met with a mind as honourable

able as Mr. Eltham's: I am persuaded *he* would never have revealed this anecdote."

Mrs. Denbigh went on reading, and Clarentine again opened her book.

The journal of Mrs. Hertford's foreign adventures, as well in Switzerland as in Italy, she had not patience to get through, nor did it appear that Somerset himself had; for one of the last sheets having accidentally been touched by the hot sealing-wax, had adhered together, and remained unopened.

Turning next to Mrs. Hertford's correspondence, one of the first paragraphs she met with was the following:

"Eltham, as I had reason to believe he would, is finally dismissed. I was sorry, as no other rival to the *guardian* appeared, to part with him; but he was a constant basilisk to my sight: I loathe and justly dread him more than any man upon earth. My feelings with regard to Somerset are those of indifference; with regard to him they amount to abhorrence."

"So then," cried Mrs. Denbigh, interrupting herself, "poor Eltham was sacrificed to this detestable woman! She seems to have held you by a wire, and to have guided

guided you all, at her own pleasure, like
“so many puppets!”

Then resuming her lecture, she thus
went on—

“Whether Clarentine is *vain* or not, I
am unequal to deciding; but that she is
proud a thousand instances have tended to
prove. Upon that pride I have worked;
and by teaching her to think Somerset
prefers me, yet at my *solicitation* (that was
not the *exact* word I used, though) would
renounce his own attachment to restore
happiness to her, I have raised such a
storm of indignation in her mind, that,
after a very critical conversation, she
ended by telling me, Somerset was be-
come to her *an object of horror*! I truly
believe it; and truly believe also, they
are now divided for life! If he addresses
her hereafter with unusual softness, she
will attribute it to *compassion*; should he
accidentally neglect her, she will impute
it to *contempt*; when gay, she will believe
he is *triumphant*; when serious, she will
conclude he is *perplexed*. In no one situ-
ation of mind can she now ever behold
him with ease or confidence.”

Here

Here Mrs. Denbigh, angrily replacing the letter in its cover, exclaimed, "I can go no further! This is less a *woman* than a *fiend*! No doubt, what I have now been reading is the part Mr. Somerset so indignantly declared his *blood boiled at*—is the part that led him so fearfully to apprehend you suspected him of vanity and presumption!—Good God! how has she deceived me from the first moment I knew her! So thoughtless and undefining in appearance, so mischievous and unprincipled in nature!—'Tis strange—'tis wondrous strange!"

Clarentine to all this was utterly silent: to have attempted any defence of Mrs. Hertford would have been preposterous—to aggravate her errors would have been unmerciful: she therefore sat a neutral auditor of Mrs. Denbigh's exclamations, and felt relieved, when, sickened of the subject, she, at length, voluntarily changed it.

Late in the evening the travellers arrived safely at Hampstead, and proceeded immediately to the house of Mr. Lenham.

That gentleman's reception of them was cordial and chearful; Mrs. Barclay's, in
her

her way, was friendly; and her daughter's, as usual, blunt and indifferent.

After the customary compliments and congratulations were over, Clarentine, who dreaded herself to ask any questions relative to Mrs. Hertford, was by no means sorry, however, to hear Mrs. Denbigh enquire of Mr. Lenham where she was.

"At her uncle's house in town," replied he.

"She is going to Bath soon," cried Miss Barclay.

"To Bath?"

"Yes; she complains of her health, and says the waters have been prescribed to her."

"*Lethean waters*, they should be," said Mrs. Denbigh, in a low voice to Clarentine.

"I suspect," returned Clarentine, smiling, "she would be perfectly content to resign those to *us*."

The change since the morning, which Somerset now observed in the behaviour of Clarentine; the returning sweetness with which she treated him; the timid sensibility that unconsciously betrayed itself

self in her fine eyes whenever they met his, and the conciliating gentleness of her voice as often as she ventured to address him, filled him at once with hopes so flattering, and gratitude so unbounded, that, all animation and vivacity, he conversed with a gaiety and spirit which infused cheerfulness into the whole party, and made the evening appear to Clarentine one of the happiest, though one of the shortest, she had ever known.

When Mrs. Denbigh arose to depart, and had taken leave of the rest of the company, approaching Clarentine, whose thanks for her late kindness were as warm as they were sincere, she took her hand, and pressing it affectionately between her own, said, "Do not talk to me of thanks, dearest girl, but of courage to support your loss: I know not how to part from you, for to me you have proved a companion so invaluable and so attaching, I dread the frightful solitude to which I am now returning "

Clarentine, equally gratified and affected by this speech, promised with the utmost alacrity, since they still resided so near, although they were no longer under
the

the same roof, to make her visits frequent and long, and to spend as much of her time with her as she wished.

She then attended her to the door, whither they were accompanied by Somerset, who was to escort Mrs. Denbigh home, and who, as she descended the steps, held out his hand to Clarentine, and said with a half smile, "Will you not, my sweet friend, bestow one word of consolation at parting upon your second fellow-traveller?"

"No," replied she, cheerfully, "for if he finds the separation very irksome, he need not doubt the pleasure we shall all have in seeing him as often as he can come to us." So saying she gave him her hand, which, with blessings and thanks, he pressed to his lips, and then flew after Mrs. Denbigh.

The pleasure with which Clarentine now revisited her former apartment, and again beheld so many objects that reminded her of the happy time when Somerset and she (upon the same friendly terms to which they appeared to be returning) seemed to have no wish so earnest as that of mutually serving and pleasing each

each other, was lively and unrestrained. Every doubt of his sincerity removed; convinced almost to a certainty of his love, and assured she had nothing more to apprehend from her insidious rival, she surveyed all the different testimonies of his faithful affection with the same grateful exultation she had first accepted them; and, at length, retired to bed in a state of contentment arising nearly to felicity.

C H A P. XXIV.

CLARENTINE had been settled once more at her venerable guardian's near a fortnight, when, soon after breakfast one morning, as she was sitting alone in her own room, another letter was brought to her from Sophia.

MISS DELMINGTON.

Delmington-House, February.

“ I have strange things to tell you, dearest Clarentine—*so* strange, that half doubting

doubting the possibility of their being real *myself*, I am almost afraid *you* will doubt it entirely. One moment, eager to come to the point, the next, frightened and ashamed, I know not how in the world to *begin*, and as for *finishing*, really believe I must leave that to the unmoved and tranquil Harriet. Dear, she does stroll about the house with an air so provokingly calm and at her ease, I could almost beat her! Why is not every body as distracted and restless as I am? My mother's kind and anxious face is the only one in the family I can look at with any patience: dear Edgar is not here, or else he would, perhaps, sympathize in my perturbations; at least, I am sure he would not appear so indifferent. I cannot bear indifference just now—if I dared, I would rather *pinch* people than suffer them to retain the slightest symptoms of it!

“Must I not now, however, endeavour to begin my story? You will otherwise pinch *me* when we meet, I suppose. Well then, take the following strange (there is no other term for it, relation.

“We have lived here, as well since the departure of Mr. Somerset as before his
arrival,

arrival, in extreme good humour with each other, visiting or visited every day, dancing or playing every evening, and—*bref*—in high spirits and perfect amity.

“ On a sudden, however, lo and behold! a few days ago, while with Emma, I was sitting *thrummyng* upon our old harpsichord in the parlour, the door opened, and in walked—you shall guess *who* when you hear the rest.

“ How-d’ye-does and very wells, and thank-yes, and speeches over on both sides, I quitted my seat, and taking my work, placed myself at the window, and tried to start one of the usual conversations concerning sunshine and rain, wind and calm; for, to speak the truth, my companion’s looks and countenance perplexed me a little, and taught me, though I scarce knew why, to apprehend something extraordinary was coming: these amusing topics, however, had no effect upon him, and every five minutes there ensued a profound and embarrassing pause.

“ Mercy, thought I, this whimsical wretch is always alarming me! What am I to expect now?

“ He

“ He kept me not long in suspense—but in a short time, dispatching poor Emma upon some bootless errand, (I wonder what right people have to take such liberties with *my* sister!) approached me, as I still pretended to be immensely busy, and seating himself at my side, would have taken my hand: I drew it back; and though I did not speak, looked, I believe, a little dismayed, for presently he cried—
‘ Why is my lovely friend thus silent and thus frigid? She takes from me all courage to begin the subject upon which I came purposely to address her: dearest Sophia,’ added he, (my unfortunate little round face teaches every body to be familiar with me) ‘ speak to me—tell me I may open to you my heart, and that you will deign to hear its secrets with indulgence!’

‘ What, more secrets?’ cried I, endeavouring to rally, ‘ I thought I had penetrated all yours long ago!’

‘ O no!’ cried he again, and almost forcibly snatching my hand, ‘ you know not yet what a capacious heart it is—how many secrets it can contain, nor how nearly its present feelings relate to yourself.’

“ I looked

“ I looked up, I looked down, I coloured, I turned pale ; in short, I was so conscious of having the direct appearance of what at that moment I certainly was—a fool—that unable to keep my seat, knowing that the man’s piercing eyes were fixed upon my face the whole time, I hastily arose, and made an attempt to run out of the room : it was but an attempt, however, for instantly pursuing me, he once more caught my hand as I was opening the door, and never parted with me till not only his *own*—but *my* poor secret was revealed also.

“ Can you conjecture what this double mystery was, Clarentine ? No, you say. Why then, fancy you see us both seated again at that memorable window ; I still looking filly—he saucy, and I am afraid a little secure—and attend to the sequel.

“ One of the first things he asked me, and almost in as plain terms as I now repeat it, was—‘ Can you love me, dearest Sophia ?’

“ I did not answer like poor Kate—‘ *I cannot tell* ;’ but my look of indecision, and his own straight-forward enquiry, I fancy reminded him of that scene, for he presently

sently added with a smile—‘*If thou canst love me, take me: if not, to say to thee—that I shall die, ’tis true—but for thy love, by the Lord, no; and yet I love thee too.*’—Ay, dear Sophia, more than, after my late disappointment, I believed it possible I ever could love again. Your’s is the exact character I ought to form a connection with: I know you to be amiable, I have experienced that you can be generous, and to all those with whom you are allied by the ties of nature, I see that you can be affectionate. I will not, however, deceive you, Sophia; I will not tell you that I feel for you that extravagant and impetuous passion I felt for your fascinating cousin; but I admire the excellence of your understanding, I delight in the gaiety of your conversation, I love the goodness and sincerity of your disposition, and the graces of your animated and enchanting little countenance have half turned my head!—I cannot be happy *without* you, and *with* you, I may not only be happy *myself*, but prove the means of rendering *you* so likewise.—Be mine, then, dearest Sophia! complete your

work, and as you begun, so establish my recovery '.

" There were things in this speech, you will allow, that could not be very flattering to my vanity, but in favour of its openness and manly honesty I forgave all the rest. I shall not tell you, however, whether I sent him away to *hang himself*, or whether I at length granted the permission he so earnestly solicited, of being allowed to apply to my mother: such secrets never *should* be told; but this, (and I write it with almost as much incredulous amazement as you will read it) this I *must* tell you—the momentous Yes, that is to decide our future destiny, we are mutually to utter—on *Tuesday sevenight*!—Heugh! the very idea takes away my breath!

" O, dearest Clarentine, thoughtless and inconsiderate as we both are now that we are upon the edge of the precipice, I tremble to think of all the absurdities and follies we may both commit!—My mother tells me he is bent upon carrying me to London this very spring: I wished—you know how eagerly—to go with Lady Julia; but dread nothing so

much as entering upon a scene so new, with a companion, who, greatly as I shall love, it is impossible, however, I can look up to with the deference I should to a more experienced guide. The indulgence which the sweetness of his temper promises me, I almost fear, and the means of dissipation which will be offered me I start at, from the terror of abusing. I have not your moderation, dear Clarentine, nor half your native love of tranquillity. I shall become an odious little fluttering coquette during my youth, and degenerate at last into a gossiping old card-player—no, I shall *not* though, now I think of it, for I hate cards: ay, but perhaps your abominable London may teach me to like them; are *you* become a gambler yet?

* * * *

“ Give me joy, my own Clarentine, give me joy if you love me!—It has just been determined, that instead of going to London to figure away in all the new-fangled frippery of an upstart fine lady, in *a house of her own*, and *a coach of her own*, and all the etceteras that would infallibly have turned my giddy brain, I am this year,

year, while we are in town, to reside with a relation of his, a Mrs. Germaine, who is to hold my *leading-strings*, and preserve me (if she can) from exposing myself! I am enchanted at this plan, for now I can answer for *one* half of my conduct, if somebody else will have the goodness to answer for the *other* half; to support the whole burden myself would have been too much.

“ I feel so easy and so light since this scheme has been agreed upon, that I am convinced my *presentiments* were ominous! I should certainly have run wild, got into debt, caused half a dozen duels, and ended by being sent home in disgrace!

“ My dearest mother, in conjunction with Lord Welwyn, procured for me this happy—release from myself! What sort of a person Mrs. Germaine is, whether young or old, I do not know; all I have to hope is, that she will hold the reins tolerably tight, and keep us both in good order. Would my mother could accompany me; or, at least, that we could have succeeded in delaying this formidable ceremony till I had it in my power to congratulate myself on feeling a little wiser; both

the one and the other, however, are impossible: *she* cannot, at present, quit Delmington, and *he* protests, that if he allowed me time to become one atom more prudent or more circumspect, he should grow afraid of me!

* * * *

“ O this Mrs. Germaine, I dare say, is a good sort of a woman after all. Lady Julia has just been here, and tells me she is to be presented by her, and to go every where with her whilst she is in London. Dear, how people can be so immensely obliging and convenient as to take charge of all the unruly rustics that offer themselves to their care! It must often be heavy work; with me, perhaps, she will find it too *light* work. It will be very shocking if I should—but it is a thousand to one if I do not sometimes break out of bounds: I know that I shall have such an encouraging example in my companion, that nothing less than a miracle can withhold me from following it.

“ You see, Clarentine, now I feel safe, I grow saucy again.

“ Lord Welwyn’s time for setting it is not yet exactly fixed, but I have great reason

reason to hope we shall all take our flight from hence pretty nearly at the same moment; Harriet and Edgar are both to be of the party; the first will reside with Lady Julia, and my dear brother is to have lodgings in our neighbourhood.

“ Talking of brothers, by the way, do not let me be so unnatural as to omit telling you that we have heard very lately from poor Frederick, who writes with great cheerfulness, has again been promoted, and gives us strong reason to hope we shall see him once more in the course of the Autumn.

“ Mrs. Harrington, Heaven be praised! is down in Lincolnshire, and has there spent the whole winter. My mother has written to her an account of the *how's* and the *ands*, that is to say, of all our late proceedings, but has yet received no answer. I have a notion she will not be much delighted; she has rather a horror of a certain gentleman, and would sooner admit any body than him, I believe, to the honour of becoming her relation. What is to be done, however? I cannot persuade him to ask for her con-

sent, do all I will; and her displeasure he only laughs at. Horrid undutiful!

“ Well, but now, my beloved Clarentine, I must bid you farewell. Write to me; scold me, if in this letter I have shewn too much levity; give me your prayers and your good wishes, and if you have any pity in your nature, bestow it all on *Tuesday se’nnight* upon your frightened, but most tenderly affectionate,

“ SOPHIA DELMINGTON.”

“ Give you my good wishes, dearest girl?” cried Clarentine, when she had read this letter. “ Ah, may heaven only grant that your happiness as a wife prove proportioned to your merit as a daughter, a sister, and a friend, and whose is the felicity that will be more deservedly perfect.”

Then sitting down immediately to answer her, while her mind was yet wholly engrossed by the subject, she wrote a letter of congratulation the most affectionate and the most cordial, and enclosing in it a shorter one upon the same occasion to Lady Delmington, sent them both by return of post.

Scarcely

Scarcely had she concluded this grateful task, when she was summoned down stairs to a gentleman, who, the maid told her, was just come in with Captain Somerset.

The name of Somerset was sufficient, and indifferent who his companion might be, Clarentine hastened down without delay.

As she approached the parlour door, she distinguished, talking with all his accustomed vivacity, the voice of Mr. Manners, and when she opened it, beheld him walking up and down the room arm in arm with his friend.

They both eagerly approached her the instant she appeared, and the first compliments over, Mr. Manners delivered to her a note from his sister, who, he informed her was in town as well as his mother, but had not had it in her power to wait upon her for reasons which her billet would explain.

Clarentine immediately opened it, and found in it these words—

TO MISS DELMINGTON.

“ We came to town last night, my dear Miss Delmington, and I am already im-
I 4 patient

patient to see you ; the most horrible cold I ever had in my life, however, prevents my stirring beyond the threshold, and will probably confine me for many days. My mother joins with me therefore in requesting, if you are not better engaged, that you will have the charity to come and dine with us. My brother will bring us your answer, and should it be favourable, our carriage shall call for you at three o'clock. I remain,

“ Dear Miss Delmington,

“ Ever affectionately yours,

“ LOUISA MANNERS”.

Albemarle Street,
February 16.

“ I accept your sister's invitation,” said Clarentine, folding up the note and addressing Mr. Manners, “ with the utmost pleasure, and will certainly be ready at the hour she appoints.”

“ I thank you in her name,” cried he, “ and will now gallop back to announce the success of my embassy. Somerset,” added he, “ do you return with me ?”

“ No ; I am going to pay a visit to Mrs. Denbigh.”

“ Mrs.

“ Mrs. Denbigh? ay, true, and I ought to do the same; I have not time to day, though; but give my respects to her, and tell her I shall take the earliest opportunity of throwing myself at her feet, and repairing my present omission.”

He then made his bow to Clarentine, and mounting his horse, hastened back to Albemarle-street.

Though scarce a day had passed since her return from Bath, during the course of which Clarentine had not seen, and even for hours conversed with Somerset, this was the first time she had ever found herself alone with him. The hints Mrs. Denbigh had dropped of his anxious desire to come to an explanation had half frightened, and made her cautiously avoid all private conversation; it was not, therefore, without extreme embarrassment she now perceived that almost every chance of escaping it was at an end: Mrs. Barclay and her daughter were both in town; Mr. Lenham was engaged with his young pupils, and Somerset forgetting his intended visit, seemed by the thoughtfulness of his looks, to be meditating how he should begin. Clarentine could not bear this pass-

fively to await the result of that deliberation, and determining to check all explanation that was preceded by a solemnity so awful, threw on her cloak, which happened to be in the room, and saying it was yet early enough to allow of her deferring to dress herself another hour, proposed accompanying him to Mrs. Denbigh's.

Somerfet, suspecting her motive, appeared a little hurt at this constant eagerness to repress every attempt he had made to speak to her apart : pitying her evident confusion, however, and knowing her to be incapable of affectation, he was too delicate to detain her by compulsion, and therefore, with whatever reluctance, suffered her to quit the room and silently followed her.

They walked on some time, Clarentine compelling herself to talk upon indifferent subjects ; he, absent and grave, scarcely knowing what he said, when, unwilling wholly to lose so favourable an opportunity, he at length interrupted her, and cried, " it would perhaps be selfish, perceiving how sedulously you seek to deny me the indulgence of a private audience,
were

were I, with a view of terminating my own suspense, to force upon you what I have to say; but will you, Miss Delmington, consent to receive a letter from me, and may I venture to hope you will answer it!"

Clarentine, grateful to him for having adopted an expedient that would save her from so much painful embarrassment, most readily replied in the affirmative, and felt half tempted to thank him for his considerate forbearance.

On their arrival at Mrs. Denbigh's, they found her at home reading a letter she had just received from Mrs. Westbury. It contained intelligence of Mrs. Hertford's arrival at Bath, and of her having been introduced to her by the gallant Mr. Lea, who, in quality of *cicerone*, attended her wherever she went.

"Further," continued Mrs. Denbigh, "to the honour of my poor friend's heart, though to the disgrace of her judgment be it known, she is as completely deceived in this artful woman as we all were. She writes concerning her in the most favourable terms, and at the same time that she thinks it necessary to con-

dole with me upon the loss we must have sustained by her departure, congratulates herself upon having made so valuable an acquisition to her own society ”

To this speech neither Clarentine nor Somerset made any answer : the name of Mrs. Hertford was almost equally hateful to them both, and their wish to change a conversation of which she was the object, led them instantly to start another subject.

“ I have had letters also this morning,” said Clarentine, with a smile, “ and letters that prove you, Madam, to be so infallible a prophetess, that henceforward I shall be more than ever afraid of your penetration.”

Mrs. Denbigh begged her to explain herself—

“ Have you forgot, then,” resumed Clarentine—“ your predilection relative to my friend Sophia ?”

Mrs. Denbigh, deceived by this speech, as Clarentine had upon a former occasion been by one of Somerset’s, immediately said, “ Is she married ?”

“ Not yet ; but the *formidable ceremony*, as she justly calls it, is to take place on Tuesday se’nnight.”

“ I am

“ I am rejoiced to hear it,” cried Mrs. Denbigh, “ and rejoiced also to think we are likely so soon to have her in this part of the world : I long to see her ; for a more rational, unaffected creature I am persuaded does not exist. Coquetry is now so much the fashion, that there are a thousand modern Misses, without half her real merit, who would have thought it extremely pretty to have kept poor Eltham a year or two in suspense, by way of revenge for not having been the *first* object of his attachment.”

“ Dear Madam,” cried Clarentine, with some earnestness, “ what an opinion you have of the unfortunate girls of the present day !”

“ Nay, do not undertake their defence, my dear : *their* cause includes not *yours*, for I am convinced that when once you knew your own mind, you would not keep a deserving man in doubt a moment.”

Conscious how ill she must, just then, appear to merit such a compliment, Clarentine blushed, and cast down her eyes ; and Somerset strolled to the window, at which he remained till the conversation took a different turn.

In

In a short time she arose to go, and attended by Somerset, who, however, took leave of her at Mr. Lenham's door, walked home.

At the hour mentioned by Miss Manners, the carriage came for her, and conveyed her to Albemarle street.

The fair invalid received her with much cordiality, and tho' impatient under illness, and extremely out of spirits, exerted herself to make the day pass off to her friendly visitor cheerfully and agreeably. Somerset was the only guest there except herself; and he was more gay and animated than she had seen him since the night of their return from Bath. A party was formed for the opera the ensuing Saturday, if Miss Manners was by that time sufficiently recovered to venture out; and at ten o'clock Clarentine took her leave.

C H A P. XXV.

EARLY next morning, Somerfet's letter arrived. Clarentine, though prepared to receive it, and in very little doubt as to its contents, opened it with great agitation, and read as follows.

TO MISS DELMINGTON.

Clifford-Street, Feb. 17. 1

“ Too long, my amiable friend, have I studied your guileless and gentle nature to be tempted for one instant to accuse you of ungenerously wishing to trifle with the feelings and happiness of another. You have evidently fought to avoid giving me any opportunity of unburthening to you my heart; you have convinced me, that to persevere in attempting it in person would distress and embarrass you: but, at the same time, having permitted me to address you by letter, you have proved to me that your reserve was not the effect of insensibility to my inquietude,

or of any design to prolong it. I bless and thank you with the warmest gratitude for this soothing conviction, and now hasten to the subject that led me to solicit your attention.

“It can—I think it can, be no new information to my gentle correspondent, that the heart of her devoted Somerset has been wholly hers almost from the first hour he saw her on his return from his last voyage. Bringing back with him the sweet remembrance of what in childhood he had known her; impatient once again to behold the lovely, the undisguised and youthful friend he had then quitted, he arrived prepared for the impression he was to receive, and unarmed to resist her power over his heart. Oh, my Clarentine, as I again surveyed you, as with looks of sweetness and confidence you addressed me, called me your friend, allowed me the indulgence of hourly and daily seeing you, how did the visions, which even in absence I had cherished, strengthen and increase! Often, when harassed and fatigued by the dangers of my profession, often had I said to myself, “What a consolatory recompence perhaps

haps awaits me on my return ! Clarentine Delmington, the dear, the ingenuous Clarentine, when next I see her, will, from an interesting and attaching child, be grown into a fascinating woman .Retired as was the situation in which I left her, unless the fortunate Edgar has succeeded in conciliating her affection, there is yet a chance of my finding her disengaged. Oh, if such should be the case; if after all my toils, my long exile, and the hardships incident to a sailor's career, I should in her meet with a reward—a friend—a mistress—what would be my happiness !”

“ These flattering illusions, however, were but of short duration. The distant, and, to me, inexplicable coldness that suddenly took place of the condescension with which, on my first arrival, you had treated me, checked the presumption with which I had indulged them, and taught me, though I had not the courage long to fly your society, at least to conceal my sentiments, and never to reveal to any my disappointment. That coldness, originating in the artifices of a woman whose very recollection is abhorrent to
me,

me, I mean not, however, to complain of; it is at length sufficiently explained; and relieved from the insupportable apprehension of having myself caused it by some undesigned offence, I now perceive with joy that it has wholly ceased, and that my friend seems permanently retrieved.

“ Oh yet, then, my Clarentine—beloved from infancy, first and dearest object of my heart!—oh yet, then, realize those delightful visions!—destroy not again the fair prospect your own sweetness has raised: prove not to me that, in venturing once more to cherish the hope of your becoming mine, I err too vainly to be forgiven! but accept my vows, and with the noble candour, the generosity that has ever distinguished you, tell me, that you think me not unworthy of adding yet another, and a more tender title to that of guardian, lover, and friend!

“ WILLIAM SOMERSET!”

Clarentine wept over this letter with mingled sensations of gratitude and joy, and determined by the speed with which she answered it to prove to its beloved
and

and generous writer the high sense she had of his disinterested attachment, and the sincere and reciprocal affection of her heart.

TO CAPT. SOMERSET.

“ My eyes are yet blinded by the tears your letter has drawn from me: they were tears, however, not of sorrow, but of admiration and thankfulness. Somerset, my noble-minded, and I will add, *dear* Somerset, I am yours. My hand I now give you, and my heart I long since lost all power to withhold from you.

“ C. D.”

In less than an hour after it had been dispatched, this billet brought the warm-hearted and enraptured Somerset to pour forth his fervent acknowledgments at the feet of its fair and ingenuous writer. She received him in her own apartment—in that closet to which he had so long been denied admittance, and with looks of timidity and consciousness, with alternate smiles and blushes, listened to his ardent protestations, and frankly confirmed the avowal

avowal which his letter had irresistibly torn from her.

Insensible to the progress of time, they had spent near three hours together, and Somerset thought not of returning, nor had Clarentine the courage to send him away, till, at length, they were interrupted by a summons to the dining-parlour. She then entreated him to go back to town, fearing that the privacy of their interview would occasion some disagreeable observations from the Barclays, which she well knew would in his presence disconcert her much more cruelly than if they were wholly addressed to herself. He obeyed her without hesitation, though not without reluctance, and having obtained permission to wait upon her again the next morning, took his leave in the tenderest and most grateful manner.

Hastening down stairs the instant he was gone, on entering the parlour she found the whole family already assembled and seated at table. She made a confused apology for being so late, and then taking her usual place without daring to raise her eyes, began her dinner in silent embarrassment, apprehensive every
moment

moment of being interrogated, and unable to determine what excuse she should make for herself.

Miss Barclay, who from the time she first walked in had never looked at any other object, in a very few minutes fully realized her fears.

“Has not Captain Somerset been with you all the morning, Miss Delmington?” cried she—“Pray why didn’t he come in to dinner?”

Clarentine, though she expected something blunt, was yet by no means prepared for a question quite so direct; and knew so little how to answer it, that before she could speak Miss Barclay had time to add—“There has been a gentleman here since breakfast, a Mr. Manners, enquiring for you; but thinking it would be pity to interrupt so snug a conversation, I bid the maid tell him you was particularly engaged with Captain Somerset, and could not see him.”

Clarentine coloured, and looked, as she really felt, extremely provoked, whilst Mr. Lenham, with some severity, said, “And by what authority, Lucy, do you allow yourself to deliver such messages in
Miss

Miss Delmington's name without her concurrence?"

"Lord, uncle, I thought it was but doing as one would be done by!" Mrs. Barclay laughed, but neither Mr. Lenham nor Clarentine, though almost equally indignant, chose to make any reply.

In the evening their party was reinforced by the addition of Mrs. Denbigh, to whom Clarentine, open and unreserved, took an opportunity of communicating what had passed in the morning. That Lady, warmly interested in all that concerned her, and entertaining of Somerset an opinion the most honourable, congratulated her with the truest affection upon the happy termination of her late anxiety, and uttered the kindest wishes for her future and lasting felicity.

Somerset himself, the next day, announced the same intelligence to Mr. Lenham, and was heard with equal, if not yet greater satisfaction. Attached to him more as a father than a tutor, the worth and excellence of his nature had been known to him even from his boyish days: formed to cultivate and value the blessings of select friendship and domestic society, Mr.
Len-

Lenham was thoroughly assured there was no other species of happiness his heart was so well fitted to enjoy, and no woman upon earth, who, from the similarity of her taste and pursuits, was so perfectly adapted to his character as the modest and retired Clarentine. The connection he had once apprehended he was upon the point of forming with Mrs. Hertford had always given him pain; less because he at that time harboured any unfavourable idea of her, than because he had discovered the apparently hopeless attachment of his young ward, and grieved to observe what ravages that attachment was making upon her peace. He thought himself bound in honour, however, not to betray a secret he had thus clandestinely penetrated, and confining alike his regret and his suspicions to his own breast, forbore all attempts to serve the one, from his reluctance to injure the other. But now that the real character of Mrs. Hertford was known to him, and all competition was therefore at an end, he hesitated not in declaring the cordial preference he had always felt disposed to give Clarentine, and the implicit reliance with which he depended

depended upon the goodness of her heart, and the firmness of her principles.

From the moment this attachment became known in the family, the extraordinary licence with which Miss Barclay permitted herself to animadvert and make sneering comments upon every look as well as action of Clarentine's, rendered the house so extremely disagreeable to her, that had she been influenced by no other motive, she would have found it difficult to resist the urgency with which Somerset implored her to become his without further delay—"My probation," said he, half smiling, "has surely been sufficiently long, dearest Clarentine, and my courtship, though *indirect*, has also, I think, been of a duration which in conscience you cannot wish to protract. What more could we discover in each other's characters, after an acquaintance of so many years, were we now with any view of that sort to defer our union even for a twelvemonth? I am no dissembler; the good and the bad, in my disposition, are equally penetrable, and all your vigilance and delay will succeed in detecting in me nothing more than an increase, perhaps,

of love, and a certain increase of impatience."

Clarentine laughed at this remonstrance, but at the same time assured him that, far from desiring to raise unnecessary difficulties, after having once freely avowed to him the sentiments of her heart, she wished only to defer their marriage till she had written to Lady Delmington, and received, what she doubted not to obtain, her sanction and consent.

"Ah, rather then, let *me* write to her!" cried Somerset, with warmth; "I distrust the earnestness with which you will plead for me; suffer me therefore to discuss the subject with her myself."

Clarentine, by no means sorry to resign to him so awkward a task, made no opposition to this proposal, but retiring with him to Mr. Lenham's study, he there wrote a short letter, which, though she criticised extremely, he permitted her not to alter, but the instant it was concluded, sealed and immediately dispatched.

Soon after breakfast the next morning, she received the following note from Miss Manners.

TO MISS DELMINGTON.

“ I have at length persuaded my mother that I may be permitted to venture to the Opera to-night without any danger ; the truth is, she does not know that the villainous apothecary who attends me inflicts upon bleeding me again this morning : he talks of my being feverish, and makes horrid wry faces at me. I shall not attend to all his professional cant, however, but sick or well, dead or alive, am determined to submit to this irksome restraint no longer.

“ We have borrowed a lady’s box for this evening, and are to have it entirely to ourselves. The pit is now become too vulgar to sit in, at least, so I am told. Young Westbury, who is now in town, and called here yesterday, protests that on Tuesday last he stood during the whole of the second dance next a good old nurse, or something of that sort, who finding the wind blew cold from the stage, turned the train of her gown over her shoulders, and sat with it so, very composedly, till the curtain dropped !

“ Come

“ Come to us early, dear Miss Delmington, and make Captain Somerset send his carriage for you, as ours is never allowed (for fear it should *catch cold* and want *bleeding*) to go out in the morning when it has any duty to do at night.

“ Adieu—your’s ever,

“ L. MANNERS.”

Feb. 21.

This *prudent* note Clarentine answered with some degree of irony, congratulating its fair writer upon the philosophical indifference she expressed concerning either life or death, and applauding her for that enthusiastic *passion for music* which led her thus to brave all danger for the sake of hearing a fine orchestra! She concluded, however, by promising punctually to fulfil her engagement.

Accordingly, at the proper time, attended by one of Somerset’s servants, she drove in a hackney coach to Albemarle-street, preferring that conveyance to accepting his carriage.

Miss Manners ran out to meet her at the head of the stairs, ready dressed and in excellent spirits, but so dreadfully

hoarse she could hardly make herself intelligible.

Clarentine shook her head at her with an expressive smile, and calling her an *incorrigible racket*, proceeded forward to pay her compliments to her mother.

In a very short time they were joined by the three gentlemen who were to escort them—Somerset, Mr. Manners, and young Westbury; and as soon as tea was over, all repaired to the Haymarket.

Their box was upon the second tier, and extremely near the stage, which—the Opera having been begun some time before they entered—was already crowded with gentlemen who were standing at the side-scenes, and whom in a few minutes Mr. Westbury, as anxious to display the graces of his person as themselves, went to join.

Mr. Manners then stationed himself behind Clarentine, and addressing her in a low voice, "Pray, Miss Delmington," said he, "till what time did the important business you were transacting with Somerset the other morning engage you?"

Clarentine, extremely confused, answered, "I ought to have apologised to
you

you sooner for the rude message you received, but I assure you it was not sent out by me, nor did I know you had called till after I went down to dinner."

"And who was the kind friend that so seasonably undertook the task of removing all intruders?"

"I was very far," answered Clarentine, "either from thinking the act itself a kind one, or you an intruder."

Mr. Manners bowed, and was beginning again to speak, but with an archness in his looks which frightened her so much, that, turning hastily from him, she said, "I must not suffer you to talk to me now: we are going to have a song."

At the end of the first act young Westbury returned to them, purposely to tell Clarentine he had just seen a friend of her's, who, when the Opera was over, he would bring round to her. "I have not been able yet," added he, "to speak to him, for the stage is so full it's impossible to get at him; but I am *sur de mon fait*, and determined not to let him go without having seen you."

"And who is this friend, Sir?" said Clarentine, with great indifference.

“ Mr. Lea, perhaps,” cried Mr. Manners.

“ O, for Heaven sake, Mr. Westbury,” cried his sister, “ don’t bring *him* here! There is nobody upon earth I hate so much!”

“ And yet,” said Westbury, “ the last time I was at your house whilst you remained at Bath, I met him there.”

“ That says nothing in his favour; one’s obliged to invite all sorts of people sometimes: I repeat it therefore, he’s my aversion, and if you bring him to us, I’ll never forgive you.”

“ Westbury,” cried Mr. Manners, “ I’ll go behind the scenes with you, and you shall shew me this friend of Miss Delmington’s.”

Westbury upon this took him by the arm, and they quitted the box together.

“ My brother, **I** fancy,” said Miss Manners, when **they** were gone, “ felt by no means sorry that such an excuse was given him to exhibit *his* pretty person likewise. Pray, Captain Somerset, don’t *you* wish to join them?”

“ Yes,”

“ Yes,” answered he, smiling, “ to serve you, and hasten the approach of Mr. Lea.”

“ O, don’t talk to me of that man !”

“ Then do not talk to me of leaving you.”

“ Dear, I thought I was doing you an immense favour, for I concluded you only staid with us from motives of politeness, and was longing the whole time to play the Narcissus among the rest of the *tonish* Macaronies upon the stage.”

“ No, really, I have not any such ambition.”

“ You reserve yourself as a novelty then, to be admired in the coffee-room ?”

“ Yes,” replied he, with a laugh, “ you have now perfectly guessed it.”

“ Lord, how strangely you answer ! I can make nothing of you, and so I leave it to Miss Delmington to take you in hand.”

“ I am glad,” said Clarentine, “ your dialogue is concluded, for as the curtain is now drawing up I shall wish to be permitted to listen to the fingers.”

Very little further was said till the end of the last dance, when Miss Manners,

impatient to get to the coffee-room before Mr. Westbury could put his menace in execution, hurried them all out of the box, and besought her mother to lead towards it immediately.

In their way thither, the lobby being extremely crowded, Clarentine, fearing to be separated from her party, most gladly accepted Somerset's arm; whilst Mrs. and Miss Manners, less unused to such a bustle, proceeded composedly forward, appearing quite as much at their ease as if they had been in their own house.

Though slowly, and with difficulty, they had just reached the door of the coffee-room, and were upon the point of entering, when Clarentine, as she was drawing away her hand, and turning to thank Somerset for his assistance, beheld immediately behind her, walking arm in arm, Mr. Eltham and Sir Edgar Delmington!

Doubt and astonishment, not wholly unmixed with consternation, seized her at this sight, and bereft her of all power to advance. She changed colour, and again almost involuntarily catching hold of Somerset's arm, drew him back, and
scarcely

scarcely knowing what she said, whispered, "Let these gentlemen pass."

"What gentlemen?" cried he, but at the same instant looking round and perceiving who they were, he touched his hat to them, though not without himself undergoing a considerable alteration of countenance, and stopped to give them time, if they wished it, to speak.

Eltham was the first to make use of this opportunity. He quitted his companion, and, coming forward, gravely said, "I hope I have the honour of seeing you well, Miss Delmington?"

Clarentine only curtsied; and Sir Edgar now approaching her likewise, in an unsteady voice, and with a countenance that indicated the strongest emotion, repeated the same enquiry nearly in similar terms, and then attempted to express the pleasure so unexpected a meeting had given him; the words, however, died on his lips—he hesitated, stammered, and at length abruptly interrupting himself, said as he retreated, "I fear we detain you from your party, Madam."

Clarentine, in whose affectionate heart the sight of this early friend had revived

the remembrance of all their former intimacy, was struck with sorrow, on recovering from her first amazement, at the dejection of his looks and voice, and concerned to hear herself addressed by him with such chilling formality. Innocent and unreserved, she forgot the cause which had separated them, and seeing him only in the light of a long-absent brother—of one whom she had always loved, and still retained the truest regard for, she held out to him her hand, and, in a tone of the most conciliating kindness, said—“ No, my dear Sir Edgar, you do *not* detain me: I stay because I am sincerely rejoiced to see you, and have a thousand questions to ask concerning your family. How did you leave Lady Delmington, and my dearest Sophia?”

Sir Edgar surprised, yet deeply affected by this friendliness and cordiality, accepted her offered hand with gratitude, and bowing upon it as if to conceal his agitation, after a momentary pause, answered, “ They were both well, I thank you, and would both, had they known the honour I should have of seeing you whilst in town, have made me the
bearer

bearer of their most affectionate remembrances."

"What stay, Sir," cried Somerset, now addressing Eltham, "do you design to make in London?"

"We arrived," answered he, "late this evening, and return on Tuesday morning."

Just then Mr. Manners and young Westbury, as they were forcing themselves a passage through the crowd in their way to the coffee-room, perceived and joined them.

"Ah, Sir Edgar," cried the latter, familiarly addressing the evidently-astonished Baronet, "you have anticipated me, I find; I had prepared Miss Delmington to expect a friend, and intended to have conducted you to her myself before she left her box, but you were off so quick after the curtain dropped I had no opportunity of speaking to you."

"I have not the honour, Sir" said Sir Edgar, gravely, "of knowing to whom I am indebted for such unmerited attention."

Somewhat abashed by this discouraging reply, yet determined, after all the parade

with which he had boasted of their long acquaintance, not to suffer himself to be so easily repulsed, Westbury now said—
“ I had the pleasure, Sir, though I was not in the same college, of seeing you often at Oxford: my name is Westbury.”

Sir Edgar, in answer to this interesting information, made a slight bow; and then turning to Clarentine, “ If you will now proceed, Miss Delmington,” said he, “ we will do ourselves the honour of following you.”

Clarentine immediately moved on, and finding Mrs. and Miss Manners, when she entered, seated near the door, placed herself next them; Somerset and Sir Edgar remaining with her, the three other gentlemen strolling to the upper end of the room.

The mournful silence into which Sir Edgar now sunk, the melancholy expression of his countenance, and the fixed, yet unconscious attention with which he rivetted his eyes upon her face, disconcerted and at the same time pained her so much, she scarcely knew how to look up, or in what manner to support any part in the conversation. Gaiety at such a mo-
ment—

ment—seeing before her with every symptom of unhappiness a man she had so long known, and so long valued—it was impossible either to affect or feel: saddened, upon such an occasion, or even thoughtful, in the presence of Somerset—of him to whom she had so lately avowed her attachment, and was so soon to be united—she dreaded to appear: distressed, therefore, most cruelly, and apprehensive of being observed, she sat confused and irresolute, not knowing how to speak with her usual composure, and reluctant to betray her real feelings.

Somerset was the first to perceive and pity her uneasiness. Too liberal and noble-minded to entertain any suspicions to her disadvantage, he imputed it at once to the true cause, compassion and friendship; and felt not for a single instant any other sensation towards his less fortunate rival than that of humane and generous sympathy. The depression so visible in that rival's countenance Somerset was of all others, when he looked at Clarentine, and remembered what had been his own sufferings at the time he fancied her lost to him, the most likely to pardon. Her

com-

commiseration for him he honoured, and the undisguised and artless simplicity with which she had suffered her kindness towards him to appear, much as it might have irritated a distrustful or a selfish nature, he venerated and loved.

Anxious therefore to dissipate her embarrassment, and if possible to engage Sir Edgar's attention, he exerted himself in order to draw him into conversation, and started by turns every subject which he thought best calculated to interest him. Lady Julia he ventured not to name; but he talked to him of his own family, of Madame d'Arzele, of his sister's approaching marriage, and of the pleasure with which Miss Delmington looked forward to her arrival in town. Sir Edgar, tho' he was not sensible of half the merit of this considerate civility, answered him with politeness, and made an attempt to appear more chearful; his success, however, was by no means adequate to the pain which the effort inflicted; so little indeed did it answer to it, that Eltham, who in a short time again approached them, observing the sadness and despondency with which he still appeared to be
oppressed,

oppressed, hastily moved towards him, and taking hold of his arm, said in a low voice, yet with great earnestness, "Come away, Delmington, come away!—you'll unman yourself if you stay here any longer!"

Roused by this unexpected admonition, and but too well convinced of its propriety, Sir Edgar merely stopped to make his parting bow, and then with a look that claimed and excited all Clarentine's tenderest pity, suffered himself without opposition to be drawn away.

When they were gone—"who is that dismal-looking young man?" cried Miss Manners; "his countenance and figure interest me in his behalf, tho' he has really made me almost as vapourish as himself."

Clarentine, with a sigh, replied he was a relation of hers, and his name was Delmington—

"Well, I protest I thought so," resumed Miss Manners, "there is so strong a family resemblance between you, that the whole time he stood here I had got it into my head he was somehow or other
connected

connected with you. But pray do tell me, what is the matter with him?"

Somerfet, who saw the confusion to which this question gave rise, spared Clarentine the pain of answering it by saying with a half-smile, "cannot Miss Manners, if indeed she suspects our friend of being unhappy, bestow upon him her good wishes and her compassion, without suffering her curiosity to precede her benevolence?"

"O dear, if his history is a secret, I don't desire to penetrate it! my pity is heartily at his service, and I am only sorry he has not something more consolatory to depend on."

"He has, I hope," thought Clarentine, "the most certain of all dependencies, rectitude and good principles!"

Mrs. Manners' carriage being now announced, her son hastened forward to offer his assistance in conducting Clarentine to it, whilst his sister put herself under the care of Somerfet, and Mr. Westbury had the condescension to give his hand to her mother.

It had been previously determined that Clarentine was to sleep that night in
Albe-

Albemarle street, and return the following day to Mr. Lenham's. Somerset therefore took leave of her at the coach door, after receiving an invitation from Mrs. Manners to breakfast the next morning.

Clarentine's mind, after this distressing interview, remained in a state of the utmost inquietude and agitation. Sophia's late letters, and the favourable accounts she had heard from time to time of Sir Edgar's amended spirits, had taught her to hope, as well for his own as the sake of Lady Julia, that the juvenile partiality he had felt for her had wholly given way to reason and absence. The deep and settled depression, however, she had with so much regret observed in his appearance—his manners—his very voice, had destroyed all those expectations, and left her nothing but the afflicting consciousness of having, with whatever innocence, been the means of blasting all his youthful happiness. Soft and gentle as was her heart, this certainty was anguish to her; and she wept with bitterness over the fate of a man, whom, to have restored to peace and tranquillity, she would have sacri-

sacrificed almost every personal gratification. Sincerely did she lament the unfortunate chance which had again brought them together, and again revived, perhaps at the very time his laudable and vigorous efforts had succeeded in nearly eradicating her image from her mind, all his former sentiments. No vanity, no little ungenerous exultation mixed itself with these reflections: it was far from being a matter of triumph to her to think she had been the cause of giving pain to any human being; much less to a friend who, like Edgar, had she been permitted to accept, at the time he proposed himself to her, before her heart became sensible in favour of another, she would have given her hand to with gratitude, and have made it the sole study of her life to have repaid him for his disinterested preference. Her love for him as a child had been animated and sincere, and though as she grew up, the frequent changes she witnessed in his temper, perplexing as they were to her till the ill-chosen moment of his declaration, had often piqued and offended her, yet the habit she was in of regarding him with confidence, and treating him with intimacy,

macy, assured her, that in contributing to his felicity she should greatly have promoted her own. That time, however, was passed; and equal to the wretchedness he experienced would now have been hers, had she, to unite herself to him, been compelled to renounce Somerset!

“Alas! then, dear Edgar,” cried she, “what remains for me to do, but, with my pity, to offer up for you my most fervent prayers for the restoration, through some other channel, of that happiness, which, even if I had still the power to confer, I could no longer participate; but which the sweet and amiable creature to whom you are about to be connected is equally formed to bestow, and disposed to share!—Heaven, then, bless and teach you how to estimate her value, and return her innocent affection!”

C H A P. XXVI.

AT breakfast the next morning, when she met Somerset, her languor, and the heaviness of her eyes alarmed and grieved him : he had no opportunity of speaking to her alone, earnestly as he wished it ; but hearing she had been prevailed upon to remain with her friends till the succeeding day, put into her hands, just before he went home to dress for dinner, the following billet written with a pencil at the window :—

“In my way hither this morning, I accidentally met with Mr. Eltham :—Anxious to hear some account of his unhappy friend, I took him with me into a coffee-house, where we had a long and interesting conversation. Be not so painfully distressed, my beloved Clarentine ;—poor Delmington, great as was his agitation on first seeing you, still possesses a fortitude and manly strength of mind, which will enable
him

him, after this trying interview, to meet you upon every succeeding one with firmness and courage. He knew not, till Eltham, informed of it by some third person at the Opera, announced it to him, the happiness I have in view; the intelligence, at first, startled and confounded him; but upon the whole, has been of infinite service in determining him more resolutely than ever to banish from his mind every sentiment for you that partakes of more than fraternal warmth. Revive then, sweetest Clarentine, and suffer not the soft compassion you feel for him, at a moment like the present, to supersede all the other affections of your heart! The deep concern with which your own sorrow has filled me, entitles me to nearly as much pity as you have bestowed upon—I had almost called him—the enviable Edgar!”

With such a motive to overcome her dejection as the fear of making her generous Somerset unhappy, Clarentine found it no difficult task, when he again appeared, to meet him with all her wonted cheerfulness and composure. The caution contained in his note, delicate as it was, put
I her

her upon her guard, and proved to her, that however distant from his mind all jealous mistrust now was, he could not answer for the continuance of his serenity should her anxiety and melancholy continue also.

The *third person* alluded to as Eltham's informant at the Opera, she had not a doubt was Mr. Manners. His raillery and former archness had almost wholly ceased, and been replaced by a respectful quietness, or a general vivacity, which, as it had never, except once the night before, (upon occasion of his abrupt dismissal the morning he had called at Hampstead) given way to his natural love of tormenting, convinced her he was perfectly acquainted with the present situation of her affairs.

Early the next morning, Clarentine would have returned home, but Miss Manners, encouraged by her first success, besought her so earnestly to defer her departure till evening, that at length she consented; and with yet less difficulty a quarter of an hour afterwards, agreed to accompany her, attended by her brother, to the Shakespear Gallery: Somerset was

to be engaged the greatest part of the day upon some professional business; and Mrs. Manners, expecting visitors, declined being of their party.

Soon after breakfast therefore they set out on foot, the weather being favourable, and had nearly reached the middle of Pall-Mall, when, coming out of a bookfeller's shop alone, and with a countenance, which, though not more animated, was infinitely less perturbed than when Clarentine had last seen him, they were met, and immediately recognised by Sir Edgär Delmington.

Changing colour as he addressed them, yet struggling to appear at his ease, he stopped a few minutes to make some general enquiries, and was then taking his leave; but Miss Manners, whispering Clarentine, said—"Why don't you ask him to go with us?"

"Shall I tell him you desire it?" returned she, smiling.

"Yes, if you like it; I have no sort of objection."

"Why then, Sir Edgar," cried Clarentine, turning towards him with the same look of cheerfulness—"I am commissioned

missioned to request, in the name of this young lady, whom I beg to introduce to you—Miss Manners—that you will favour us with your attendance to the Shakespear Gallery.”

“Most willingly;” replied he, brightening at the proposal, “I ventured not to enquire whither you were going, but be assured, my desire of accompanying you preceded the honour you have done me in permitting it.”

They then all moved on, Miss Manners saying to Clarentine as they advanced—“I think your solemn friend improves; that was really a much prettier speech than I expected from him.”

“Probably,” returned Clarentine, “your goodness to him put him into spirits.”

Miss Manners made some slight answer to this, which her companion had not time to attend to, for just then they arrived at the door of the Gallery.

After they had wandered about the rooms some time, Sir Edgar, approaching Clarentine, who, with a catalogue in her hand, was sitting upon a form opposite one of the great pictures, reading the
scene

scene from whence its subject was taken, placed himself next her, and said, "Has Miss Delmington any message, any letter to send into Devonshire? We leave town to-morrow."

"No letter," replied she, "for I wrote very lately: but a thousand kind messages, to our dear Sophia in particular."

Then pausing a moment, and thinking there would be a species of affectation in so manifestly avoiding to mention Lady Julia, she presently added, "And to Lady Julia Leyburne likewise, when you see her."

Sir Edgar suppressed a sigh, and, after a short silence, said, "Have you written to Lady Julia also lately? or shall I be the first to announce to her the reports that are circulated concerning you?"

Clarentine blushed, but affecting to speak with gaiety, replied, "Till Lady Julia can repay me by some similar intelligence, she might accuse me of designing indirectly to reproach her for her cruelty, were I to speak too early of my own"—she hesitated for a word that would with propriety express her meaning, but find-

ing none that she liked, blushed yet deeper than before, and heartily repented having gone so far.

Sir Edgar, fancying he had interpreted that meaning, supplied the deficiency for her. “Of your own tenderness?” said he—“Was not that what you would have added? Oh, dearest Miss Delmington, may that tenderness, deservedly as I hope it is bestowed, be but as fervently, as gratefully returned, as it must involuntarily be envied”—he stopped, his eyes glistened; Clarentine, too, felt her’s fill with tears, and was compelled to turn away her head: recovering more firmness, however, he at length added—“Pardon me, most gentle, most beloved of human beings!—This is not language in which I ought now—I ought *ever*, distinct as were our sentiments, to have addressed you! It is the last time I will permit myself to hold it; but your own softness, and the angelic compassion you have shewn me, drew it from me! When next we meet, to utter it would be criminal: suffer me therefore, as a relief to my burning heart, this one—this only”—

“No,

“No, no,” interrupted Clarentine, though not with anger, yet with seriousness, “You have said more already than, situated as we mutually are, I ought to have allowed. From this moment, Sir Edgar, we see each other, we converse, but as brother and as sister, or we see each other, we converse no more!”

“I submit to your terms,” cried he; “they are those which, from this day forward, I meant strictly to observe. Too long, dear Clarentine, have I been inured to the painful task of self-restraint, to distrust the success with which I shall in future practise it. I have known every degree of wretchedness, borne every species of torment, which doubt, the apprehension of detection, and the pangs of disappointment, could inflict—borne them, though not with unremitting, yet with general fortitude! If, at so early a period, I could do this—suffer, yet dissimulate—smile, yet be in anguish—ah, need you fear the courage I shall now exert!—A youth of sorrow should make an old age of philosophy: who knows,” added he, forcing a melancholy smile, “what your Edgar may one day become?”

“He will become,” cried Clarentine, turning towards him with earnestness, and (no one being by) giving him her hand—“he will become, I doubt not, as happy as with worth, honour, and integrity, such as he possesses, he deserves to be! You have a disposition, dear Edgar, formed for domestic felicity—cultivate your natural love for it; attach yourself to those you live with; and, above all, cherish and be kind to the affectionate and lovely partner whom you are destined to spend your life with.”

“Dearest Clarentine,” cried he, penetrated by her kindness, and pressing to his bosom the hand he held, “how does this friendship, and the interest concerning me you so generously express, soothe and console me! Yes, best of women! I will be all your excellent heart can wish! She who has been chosen for me, I will seek to deserve and render happy; the duties, whether public or private, that may in the course of my future life be imposed upon me, I will endeavour to fulfil with exactitude and spirit: you shall be my secret guide, the unknown spring of all my actions: your friendly smile shall

shall reward, your approbation stimulate my exertions; and whatever may be my fate, or my success, Clarentine never shall have cause to blush for the voluntary errors of the friend of her infancy—the imperfect copy, but the faithful reverencer of her virtues?”

He then, seeing her too much affected to be able to speak, kissed her hand with an expression that equally partook of tenderness and respect, and hastened out of the room.

Though cheered by his fair promises, Clarentine was yet so sensibly touched by all that had passed, that she remained, after he had left her, motionless and in tears, forgetting where she was, till roused by the re-entrance, from an adjoining room, of Mr. and Miss Manners.

“What? is our young Sir Dolorous gone?” cried the latter, gaily approaching her—Clarentine, rising and walking towards one of the pictures, in a low voice answered in the affirmative, without venturing to look round.

Miss Manners, perfectly content, thought of him no more, but the next minute began talking of other subjects, criticising

the dress and appearance of every new comer, admiring the different paintings, yet scarcely looking at any one of them two minutes together, forming schemes of pleasure for the next day, reproaching Clarentine for not staying with them longer, and wondering what her mother would find to say to all the stupid *quizzes* who were that morning to call upon her.

This thoughtless rattle relieved Clarentine, and gave her time to recover her usual tranquillity. They remained in the Gallery till a late hour, Miss Manners protesting she would not go home whilst there was any chance of finding the *quizzes* there, and then walked back to Albemarle-street.

Somerfet, released from his morning engagement, called in soon after dinner, and when Clarentine took her leave, would not be denied the satisfaction of attending her home.

In their way to Hampstead, she acknowledged to him, with the ingenuous frankness that characterised her disposition, the meeting of the morning, and repeated to him the honourable assurances Sir Edgar had given her as well with regard

gard to his future conduct, as to the sentiments with which hereafter he designed to meet her.

Somerfet, with a heart so well formed to feel the value of this confidence and candour, expressed his gratitude in the most animated terms; and joined with her in uttering the sincerest good wishes for the returning peace of mind of one whom he knew was so justly dear to her.

“As for Mr. Eltham,” added he, with a smile, “the pride and resentment which your rejection occasioned, has, I plainly perceive, cured him completely. Sir Edgar’s self-conquest is solely the result of effort and principle—*this* is the effect of indignation. He speaks of you with extreme respect, but at the same time with a certain air of *haut'air* which amused me extremely, and which, as it proved to me that his angry heart was but a secondary sufferer in the business, amused me also without scruple.”

“I have some design,” cried Clarentine, with affected gravity, “to make an experiment of this kind upon *you*; I should be curious to know, upon being

discarded which would predominate in *your* mind, anger or sorrow."

"Oh, my beloved Clarentine," cried he, snatching her hand, "start not such an idea to my affrighted imagination! I cannot bear it even in raillery!"

Clarentine drew away her hand, and with a laugh, said—"If you are so susceptible of a little irony, Mr. Somerset, what would you have done had you had such a gay creature as Sophia to contend with?"

"I should have been driven to distraction; or rather, as a lover, at least, I never should have contended with her at all. The mildness and sensibility of my Clarentine suit far better with my temper than would that mis-placed wit, which sports with the affections of the heart, and makes a jest even of the most serious feelings."

"Ah," cried Clarentine, earnestly, "if such is the levity of nature you ascribe to Sophia, you wrong her cruelly! In the first place, she neither aspires, nor in fact possesses any claim to the character of a *wit*; and in the next, her disposition is kindness and benevolence itself. Hers is
all

all harmless and innocent pleasantry, resulting from real gaiety of heart, and as totally unmixed with acrimony, as it is free from the most distant intention of offending!"

"I allow her every excellence," said Somerset, "you attribute to her, and yet," continued he, smiling, "if I had been seriously attached to her, and she had treated me with the careless volatility with which, whilst at Delmington, I often saw her treat Mr. Eltham, I much doubt whether, like him, I could with patience have indured it."

"Yours is not a character," said Clarentine, "which like his would have called that volatility forth, and therefore upon you it would never have been tried; it suits Mr. Eltham, however, exactly, and by amusing, will contribute to attach him with far more constancy than a disposition less airy and less spirited could have any chance of doing."

She then gave a different turn to the conversation, and soon after they stopped at Mr. Lenham's.

The answer which Somerset expected with so much impatience from Lady Del-

mington, arrived at his house in town early on the fifth day after he had written to her. He was at Hampstead when it was delivered, but having left orders that whatever letters came for him in his absence should immediately be brought after him, one of his servants rode thither with it full speed, and alighted at Mr. Lenham's gate just as he and Clarentine were walking up to it, on their return from a morning visit they had been making to Mrs. Denbigh.

Joy, hope, and rapture, animated the eyes of Somerset, and brightened his whole countenance as he received and looked at the welcome post-mark of this most ardently desired letter. Clarentine observed his emotion, and by a quick glance at the direction, observing likewise whose was the hand that had written it, silently withdrew her arm from within his, and all consciousness and emotion in her turn, walked hastily into the house.

In a few minutes, Somerset, with unabated ecstasy, followed her. She had taken refuge in Mr. Lenham's study; which at that hour of the day, he being engaged with his pupils, was almost always empty,
and

and was there traversing the floor with agitated steps, when he entered and flew to her—

Oh, now," cried he, seizing her hand and pressing it with fervour to his lips, " Oh, now, best beloved of my heart, I may indeed call you my own, my ever-destined Clarentine! All suspences at an end, all doubts, all fears eternally removed, you are mine for life, irrevocably and solely mine! Read, dearest of creatures, read and confirm to me by one kind look the transporting contents of this enchanting letter! You said that upon those contents my fate should depend; ratify that promise, and tell me you are all my own!"

Gently disengaging herself from his hold, deeply blushing, yet attempting to laugh at his earnestness and unwonted impetuosity, Clarentine took the letter, and moving towards a chair, sat down to read it, Somerset placing himself next her.

The consent for which Lady Delmington had been solicited was granted, she found, with the readiest alacrity, and the good wishes and felicitations to both parties which followed it were cordial and

animated. The letter, however, was short though satisfactory, and ingeniously as Clarentine fought to gain time by prolonging its perusal, she was at length compelled to own she had concluded it, and obliged to answer his eager supplications—

“What can I say to you, Mr. Somerset?” cried she, hesitating and embarrassed. “You do not suspect me of designing to recall the word I so lately passed? Why then press me to speak? What would you have me add?”

“That you will now,” answered he, with warmth, “receive my faith immediately; no one obstacle stands between us, but wholly on your decision and on your mercy rest my hopes!”

Clarentine, abashed and hesitating, still hung back, and still evaded fixing any positive time, till Somerset, no longer able to command his impatience, named himself so very early a period, that, rather than permit him, by her silence, to conclude the proposal met with her concurrence, she was forced herself to decide upon the last day of the following week.

This

This concession gained, he then left her, all gratitude and delight, and hastened back to town in order immediately to set on foot the necessary preparations for their marriage.

C H A P. XXVII.

THREE days after this arrangement had been made, Clarentine was much surprised again to receive a letter from Sophia—

TO MISS DELMINGTON.

Delmington-House, Feb. 27.

“ When I sent off my last letter, I concluded that as we were to meet so soon, nothing was likely to occur that could make me desirous of writing again; I was mistaken, however, as upon a thousand occasions has happened to me before, and I feel that I must either once more relieve my mind by a little *literary prosing*, or be accessory myself to its going wild.

“ Our

“ Our two wanderers, Edgar and his friend, returned to us yesterday ; Heaven only knows *why* they ever left us ; Mr. Eltham said it was to make some indispensable arrangements previous to a certain event, and Edgar assured us it was merely to bear him company. It is as well to *seem* credulous when people take pains to deceive you, and so when they are by, I appear all faith and trust ; but to speak honestly, my own private opinion is, that they went for no other purpose than—to go to the Opera !—Strange that two rational creatures should travel so many miles upon such an errand ! So it is, however, and to the Opera they both hastened the very first night of their arrival.

“ There is a mild and gentle being in the world, whom you have occasionally heard me mention by the name of Clarentine Delmington, who, not an hundred years ago, was an object of nearly equal adoration to both these operatical adventurers. With this fair creature, this perfect semblance of *white-robed innocence*—speaking soft and smiling sweet—they met, on their way to some room or other adjoining to the theatre. Their feelings upon the occasion

caſion were rather awkward, ſince, in addition to the emotion which her ſudden appearance excited, they had the pangs of envy to contend with ; for this lovely damſel, ſo relentless and ſo inexorable unto *them*, was leaning, with looks of cordial ſatisfaction, upon the arm of another man, which other man they had but too much reaſon to ſuſpect was their favoured ſucceſſor !

“ O, what a treat it would have been to me to have ſeen this matchleſs triumvirate at the moment their eyes firſt met ! I except poor Edgar, however ; it would have given me nothing but concern to have witneſſed the pain which he, I doubt not, felt : but as for Meſſrs. Eltham and Somerſet, their countenances I think muſt have been delightful. To have *pitied* either would have been a farce ; one was upon the point of marriage with the choſen miſtreſs of his heart—and the other, we muſt all allow, was in a yet more enviable ſituation, being engaged to ſuch a phœnix as your Sophia. Beſides, Eltham, when he mentioned the circumſtance, did it with an air ſo eaſy and unembarrasſed, that I venture to flatter myſelf it made but little impreſſion upon his mind : he
met

met me not afterwards with one atom less vivacity or good humour, and appears not in the slightest degree more thoughtful or more depressed. All therefore that *his* aspect testified, I imagine, was surprise, mixed perhaps with a trifling expression of offended self-consequence. The poor gentleman is still a little splenetic, I assure you, when that horrible word *rejection* comes across his mind! How soon he means cordially to forgive you I know not; he seems more disposed towards it, however, than I once thought he ever would be; and therefore I am not without hopes, that when we all meet I shall persuade him to take you by the hand and ask you to be friends with him; pray do not refuse him, if you still mean to continue friends with *me*.

“ As for Edgar (who, by the way, my mother has no suspicion of your having seen) he never speaks of you without the extremest veneration and gratitude. We have had a long conference together concerning you, and he tells me that your behaviour to him was truly that of an angel! Dearest girl, how do I love you for your sweetness and sympathy to this best of brothers!

brothers! It has calmed his agitated mind, and been balm to his wounded heart. You have promised him, he says, your future friendship, your *sisterly* friendship; you wept over the too faithful picture he drew of his long sufferings; you spoke peace and affection to him—and with the kindest advice, uttered the most benevolent good wishes! Excellent and considerate Clarentine! never can I sufficiently thank you for a softness so well timed, a tenderness that has been so beneficial!

“ Rejoicing that this first meeting is over, he now assures me, that, although he never can see you with indifference, he shall henceforward see you without any of those tumultuous sensations which at that moment so nearly overpowered him. I sincerely hope his prediction will be verified; but, meanwhile, cannot help feeling rather disposed to bear him a little malice for having hitherto so completely deceived me: I really thought him thoroughly recovered, for his behaviour to Lady Julia this whole winter has uniformly been so attentive, her own gentleness leads him always to address her with such softness,

softness, and he feels for her, I am convinced, so much interest and regard, that it seemed to me impossible he should at the same time harbour such an ardent affection for another object. I suppose, however, *his* heart is very *capacious* as well as Mr. Eltham's; I am certain, at least, it is very difficult to read.

“ I say nothing to you, my beloved Clarentine, of the letter my mother lately received from Mr. Somerset. The idea of next Tuesday puts me in such a fright for myself, I have no courage to speak of the approaching fright which likewise awaits you. Lady Julia is so generous as to laugh at my dismay; her own turn, however, will come next September, and then I hope to have gained spirits to retaliate the favour *in kind*.

“ Mrs. Harrington has at length vouchsafed to answer my mother's letter, and to answer it, also, with far greater civility to our friend Eltham than I expected. His near relationship to Lord Welwyn, whose title she respects infinitely more than his character; and his splendid fortune, which beyond even title itself she re-
veres,

veres, induce her to silence every objection she would otherwise, I am persuaded, make to the man himself, and courteously to congratulate my mother upon Sophia's *good luck*.

"Where shall you be, dearest Clarentine, the eighth of next month? On that day we all expect to be in town, Lord Welwyn having consented, at his daughter's earnest request and mine, to set out at the same time Mr. Eltham and I do. Impatient as I shall be to see you, let me hope you will not, before then, have left the neighbourhood of London to ramble to any very formidable distance with your new pilot: tell him I shall be extremely angry with him if he steers his lovely prize into any remote harbour, and that he may expect a whole fleet to be sent after him to win her back again.

"Do I talk good seaman's language? Ask him, dear Clarentine, and when he has answered you, cast your eyes once more upon this paper, and give me due credit for the sincerity with which I subscribe myself,

"Your's, most affectionately,

"And truly,

"S. DELMINGTON."

Previous

Previous to the receipt of this letter, it had been agreed between Clarentine and Somerset, that immediately on their marriage they should go down to his seat in Northamptonshire. This plan they still adhered to, determining, however, to make their absence much shorter than was originally intended, for the pleasure of meeting sooner with the friends whom they expected, and on whose account they now decided to hasten back to town before the expiration of a week.

Their deliberation upon this subject was scarcely concluded, when Miss Barclay entered, followed by one of the maids, who, with a broad grin upon her face, delivered to Clarentine a card saying, "Mrs. Manners' footman, Miss, has just brought that for you."

Clarentine, wondering at her risibility, held out her hand for it, and read aloud—

Mrs. MANNERS,
At Home,
Thursday, March 4th,
9 o'clock.

"At home?" repeated the unpractised Clarentine, "and what then?"

"Lord,"

“ Lord,” exclaimed Miss Barclay, contemptuously, “ don’t you understand what then? Why, she means to invite you to some party, on Thursday.”

“ Ay, Miss, it’s true enough,” cried the maid, who, accustomed to be treated by Miss Barclay with extreme familiarity, made no scruple, when she was present, of behaving with equal freedom herself, “ for I asked the servant about it, and he told me Madam was to have a grand rout that day. For my part, I thought, maybe she had been to have come here, and so, not being well, had sent you that, to let you know she should stay *at home*.”

, Then, still laughing heartily at my *odd conceit*, she left the room.

Clarentine now turning to Somerset, said—“ I am ashamed of betraying such rustic ignorance, but do pray tell me, is this really meant as an invitation?”

“ Yes, really,” answered he, smiling.

“ And are the guests never told *what* they are invited to? Whether to a ball, a card party, or a concert?”

“ Dear, no;” cried Miss Barclay, “ its taken for granted one hears all that before

before one goes, among one's acquaintance."

"But what," resumed Clarentine, "are those to do, who like me have no acquaintance?"

"Why take their chance, and prepare themselves accordingly."

"How prepare themselves?"

"Lord, why by carrying money in their pockets that they may be ready to play if asked, and by putting on light shoes that they may be equally ready to dance."

"Thank you," cried Clarentine, bowing, "these instructions may be extremely useful to me."

"You mean to go, then?" said Somerset.

"If I knew any lady I could go with, I should certainly "

"Oh, if it depends only upon that," cried Miss Barclay, "I should like to accompany you of all things."

Clarentine looked a little disconcerted, and Somerset hastily rising, walked to the chimney.

Miss Barclay thus went on—"I'll tell you what, Miss Delmington, you have but to write a bit of a note to Miss Manners to say there's a young lady lives with
you

you who wishes to be of your party, and Captain Somerset can send it to her when he goes back to town."

"My dear Miss Barclay," said Clarentine, mildly, "you would not wish I am sure, any more than myself, to make your appearance at a great assembly, such as I presume this will be, without some married lady?"

"Perhaps Mrs. Denbigh may have been invited; I'll step to her house and ask her."

Then without waiting for that encouragement she saw it was hopeless to expect, she ran up-stairs for her cloak, and set out alone for Mrs. Denbigh's.

Clarentine and Somerset remained, after she was gone, looking at each other for some minutes in silent, yet half laughing amazement, at an ignorance of the world, and a forwardness at once so conceited and so vulgar.

Somerset was the first who at length spoke—

"Let not this strange proposal distress you, my Clarentine," said he, "I shall see Manners this evening, and will commission him to state the case to his mother
and

and sister, and prepare them to expect your intruding companion."

"Wait, however, till she returns," said Clarentine, "perhaps Mrs. Denbigh may not be going, and then I shall have an excellent excuse for declining the invitation myself."

In less than a quarter of an hour Miss Barclay came back, calling out triumphantly as she opened the parlour door—"Well, Mrs. Denbigh *is* asked, sure enough, and means to go; so now therefore, Miss Delmington, you have nothing to do but to write the note I told you of. Let me consider," added she, sitting down and looking very thoughtful, "next Thursday, isn't it? Ay, I shall have time enough to get my new gown made, and Hannah Gibson promised to pin me up a cap whenever I wanted one."

"And who is Hannah Gibson?" enquired Clarentine.

"Why, she was a school-fellow of mine, but her father died about a year ago, and left her so poor, she has bound herself 'prentice to a milliner in Cranbourn-alley. You can't imagine what tasty caps I have seen of her making; all those that are

hung in the shop window are mostly what she did up, and every body admires them excessively. If you like, I'll ask her to contrive one for you."

"I am much obliged to you," said Clarentine, smiling, "but I beg you will not trouble her."

"Dear, she's very good-natured, and would think it no trouble, I dare say; however, we have time enough to think about that—do you write the note now."

"There is no necessity to write at all; Mr. Somerset has undertaken to carry a verbal message to town, which will do quite as well."

Miss Barclay, perfectly satisfied with this arrangement, then left them, and flew to the head of the kitchen stairs to order one of the maids to run immediately for the mantua-maker.

Somerset, who could not help being amused by the whole affair, and particularly by the obliging offer that had been made to Clarentine of applying in her behalf to the ingenious Hannah Gibson, staid only to remonstrate with her upon having rejected such assistance, and mount-

ing his horse, which at that moment was brought to the door, rode back to town.

During breakfast the next morning, Clarentine received a very polite note from Mrs. and Miss Manners, expressive of the pleasure it would give them to see her friend, and inclosing for her a card similar to the one that had been sent the day before, which they requested she would deliver in their names.

Miss Barclay, whose rage to be introduced into fashionable society was as unbounded as her qualifications to shine in it were deficient, received this invitation with equal pride and rapture. In her own opinion secure henceforward of moving only in the most elegant circles, she enjoyed already in anticipation the envy which amongst her less fortunate acquaintance she should excite, and the wonder which she doubted not to inspire: even the tasteful Hannah Gibson she now began to think unworthy of the honour of adorning her; and recollecting accidentally to have heard the fashions of Cranbourn-Alley a little derided, resolved to bespeak every part of her head-dress upon this important occasion from the more modish
maga-

magazines that so abundantly supply the neighbourhood of Tavistock-street.

With this determination, as soon as breakfast was over, she walked alone to town, carrying with her, in addition to what remained of her own allowance, a painfully-extorted half-guinea, the reluctant produce of her mother's bounty.

On her return, about half an hour before dinner was announced, not finding Clarentine in the parlour, she ran up to her room to impart to her the success of her expedition.

"Lord, how comfortable you are sitting here," cried she, as she flung open the door—"as for me, I hav'n't a leg to stand upon; I do believe I hav'n't walked less than eight miles: I have made some excellent bargains, however, and have bought the sweetest necklace and earrings you ever saw! Only look," added she, taking a little box out of her pocket, and eagerly displaying its contents, "what a beautiful colour these beads are; I got them next door to where I went about my cap;—do you like them?"

"I dare say," answered Clarentine evasively, "they will be very much ad-

mired ; but what success had you with regard to your cap ?”

“ O dear, I didn’t buy any, for they told me it would be much better to chuse something that I could pin on myself in the way of a fancy turban ; so I fixed upon a spangled gauze, and to-morrow I am to have some very smart ornaments sent home to wear with it.”

Clarentine was beginning to congratulate her upon having been able so well to suit her taste, when hastily interrupting her, Miss Barclay said, “ now I know you must have bought a great many new things against your wedding ; do let me see some of them :—what do you intend to be married in ?”

“ Indeed,” said Clarentine, colouring and half smiling—“ I have not yet thought about it.”

“ No ?—well, that’s the oddest thing I ever heard of !—In your place I should already have settled every individual article I meant to wear ; to be sure, however, you intend to go to church in white ?”

To this, Clarentine, not very desirous of dwelling upon the subject, made some slight,

flight, careless answer, and then added—
“ Did you see any body in town whom
you knew ?”

“ Yes, I saw Mrs. Hertford driving at
an immense rate along Pall-Mall in a dash-
ing new chariot : I wonder whose it was,
and why she never let me know she was
come home.”

“ Ah,” thought Clarentine, “ there is
no chance, I hope, of her making any
advances towards a renewal of her former
intimacy in this house, whilst Somerset
visits at it so often, and I continue to in-
habit it.”

They were now called down to dinner,
and an end was put for that time to Miss
Barclay’s interrogations.

The next day, however, Clarentine had
all the fatigue to undergo of examining
and praising the tasteless finery she had
bespoke, and which (consisting of gaudy
ribbons, showy flowers, and coloured
gauzes) arrived, to the great joy of the im-
patient expectant, early in the course of the
morning. Her discourse, throughout the
whole afternoon, turned upon nothing but
the most fashionable method of arranging
these various decorations ; and so com-

pletely did she even surfeit her mother upon the subject, indifferent as she generally was to what was passing, that, at length, exerting an unusual degree of authority, she called the maid, and in spite of all Miss Lucy's indignant remonstrances, very peremptorily ordered her to bundle all the *tawdry trumpery* into a band-box together, and *hust* with it up stairs directly.

Disagreeable to Clarentine as were these contentions, it was yet a relief to her upon the present occasion to be exempted from any further consultations; and the more so, as a few minutes after the removal took place, Somerset appeared at the gate, and entered the house.

C H A P. XXVIII.

THE hour at length arrived so ardently desired by Miss Barclay, and so gladly hailed by Clarentine likewise, (who, sickened of the very name of an assembly, was anxious to have it over) when they were informed the carriage was at the door which was to convey them to Albemarle-street; they stopped for Mrs. Denbigh in their way, and then proceeded immediately to town.

On their arrival at Mrs. Manners', Somerset, hearing their names announced, hastened out to meet them at the head of the stairs; he reproached them for being so late (it was then considerably past ten o'clock), and directing them where to find Miss Manners, after they had spoken to her mother at the door, followed them across the room.

The reception that was given to Miss Barclay in favour of the persons she came

with, was extremely polite, and did honour to the considerate good-nature with which Somerset had taken the trouble to prepare them for her introduction: the flaunting shewiness of her dress however, particularly when contrasted with that of her companion which was all simplicity, appeared among the young people who surrounded Miss Manners to excite a mixture of surprise and ridicule. Some shrugged their shoulders with an air of cold contempt, whilst others, after staring at her from head to foot with the most stedfast curiosity, turned upon their heel with a half-stifled laugh, and tripped away to communicate their sarcastic observations to a different party.

To all this, fortunately for her, Miss Farclay, at the height of her ambition, self-satisfied and elated, was totally insensible: careless what the women thought of her, she scarcely noticed any of them; but at the approach of every fresh gentleman who addressed Somerset, her heart fluttered, her face assumed a complacent smile, and in the hope of exciting attention she instantly began a *giggling* sort of conversation with Clarentine, which

which lasted, with an affectation of infantine vivacity, till, one by one, they again retreated, and she was left only with the ladies.

Meanwhile Mrs. Denbigh, seeing them provided with seats and peculiarly attended to by Miss Manners, who stationed next to Clarentine scarcely spoke to any one else, consented, after some time, to sit down to cards, and had just left them for that purpose, when Mr. Lea, smiling and bowing with all his wonted courteousness, approached them—

“ This animal,” said Miss Manners, in a hasty whisper to Clarentine as he advanced, “ has taken it into his head to marry since you saw him : I long to know which is his wife.”

Then turning to him—“ How do you do, my dear Sir ?” cried she ; “ I hope you have brought Mrs. Lea with you ? In what part of the room am I look for her ?”

Mr. Lea, in answer to this, touched a lady’s elbow, who, with her back towards them, was conversing with a group of gentlemen at some distance, and on her turning half round said, “ My dear, allow me, this is Miss Manners,” and taking

her hand, he drew her towards them, and in the person of his wife, discovered to the half-petrified Clarentine, and the no less wondering Miss Barclay, the form and features of Mrs. Hertford!

“ Lord!” exclaimed Lucy, abruptly addressing her, “ is it you? Well, to be sure you have got over your disappointment pretty quick! How long have you been married? and when did you come to town?”

Mrs. Hertford, or rather Mrs Lea, coloured, but made no answer, to those blunt enquiries, contenting herself, after a formal curtsy, to Miss Manners, who had risen at her approach, to bestow upon her late confidant a slight inclination of the head; and then moving away again, she renewed the conversation her husband had interrupted.

“ Do you know the lady?” said Miss Manners in a low voice to Lucy—

“ Dear, yes, Madam, I have known her ever so long, and I can’t imagine why she would not speak to me; it’s very impertinent, I must say, and I have a monstrous mind to go and have a little conversation with her about it.”

“ No,

“No, no,” cried Clarentine—“for Heaven sake do not think of it!”

“What is it against which Miss Delmington is so earnestly remonstrating?” said Mr. Manners, who with Somerset just then walked up to them.

Clarentine, terrified, left, in the hearing of Mr. Lea who still kept his post near them, Miss Barclay should blunder out any untimely explanation, was upon the point of entreating her in a low voice to be careful of what she said, when she saw her suddenly start up, and as Mrs. Lea was crossing the room to sit down, follow, and place herself next her.

Miss Manners laughed, and leaning towards Clarentine said, “is your friend going to quarrel with the poor bride?”

“I hope not; but indeed it’s very possible; let me entreat you to go with me into the next room, for I could not bear to witness any scene of that sort.”

“Dear! as I know so little of either of the parties, such a battle would entertain me extremely: however, I’ll go wherever you like.”

So saying she arose, and arm in arm they walked into the adjoining apartment.

Somerfet and his friend followed them, and the former seizing the first opportunity of speaking to Clarentine unheard, said, with some anxiety—

“What drove you hither with such precipitation?”

She explained to him as briefly as she could her reasons, and then asked him whether he had yet seen or spoken to Mrs. Lea herself?—

“No,” answered he gravely, “nor do I wish it.”

Miss Manners now addressing her brother said, “Have you been presented to Mr. Lea’s pretty wife?”

“Yes; the happy bridegroom did me that honour yesterday: I met him whilst I was riding out, and he insisted upon my going home with him solely for that purpose.

“Well?”—

“Well—I beheld, admired, bowed and retreated.”—

“Did not you like her then?”

“I had more reason to like her than her poor cringing booby of a mate, for at the same time that she treated him with the most ineffable contempt, she behaved
to

to me with the utmost sweetness and complacency."

"With contempt already!" cried Miss Manners—"Good God, then, why did she marry him?"

"Mr. Lea," answered her brother, drily, "is worth 1200*l.* per annum."

"And was that the best reason she had for accepting him?"

"Draw your own inferences from what you have heard," replied he; and turning away, he walked up to another party.—

To Clarentine's infinite joy, Miss Barclay rejoined them no more till Mrs. Denbigh's game broke up, and Somerset's carriage, in which they were to return, was announced.

In their way to the outward room, whilst Mrs. Denbigh stopped a few minutes to take leave of some ladies of her acquaintance, Clarentine again perceived Mrs. Lea seated near the place where they were standing: she purposely avoided looking towards her, but hearing her own name mentioned, could not, with equal forbearance, resist giving some attention to what was passing.

The

The person to whom she was speaking was a young man, who, with his eyes fixed upon Clarentine, seemed to have been earnestly enquiring who she was—

“Whatever she is now matters very little,” answered Mrs. Lea, in a half whisper, “since her rank and situation will in a few days be entirely changed.”

“Is she, then, going to be married?”

“Yes; she forms a brilliant connection with a man of large fortune, whom, after using extremely ill for many months, she at length, in the failure of two others, (a young Baronet, and the nephew of an Earl,) condescends to accept.”

“She’s a beautiful creature.”

“Yes, a pretty sort of a girl, somewhat haughty and vain, however, but you animals contribute to spoil all these rural beauties by your unbounded flattery; they are not used to such fine things, poor souls, when they first creep out of their caves, and if you had any mercy you would moderate the doses a little, and be content to turn their heads by degrees, rather than set them a spinning all at once! As for little Delmington, her hopes were raised

raised so high when she first left her native wilds, that it's ten to one if she does not actually give herself great credit for having had the humility to stoop to any thing under a Duchefs's title ! These misses all come flocking up to town with Lady Coventry's successes in their heads, and while their milkmaid-bloom lasts, feel so secure of triumph, that they neglect or mismanage, the first three months, more splendid opportunities than they ever obtain afterwards with the best laid plans in the world."

" Who is it she marries ?"

" Do you know Captain Somerset ?"

" No."

" That's him standing yonder with Mr. Manners — He's what grave and sage people call a worthy, good creature, and what I call a fine young man, very easy to be duped however, very credulous and very unsuspicious."

" Is that" said Mrs. Lea's friend, with a significant smile, " what the lady particularly requires ?"

" Exactly," answered she —

Though Clarentine, it will easily be supposed, lost many sentences of this charitable

charitable dialogue, she yet heard enough to tinge her cheeks with the deepest crimson, and to irritate her so extremely, that disdaining herself for having listened to so much, she now moved abruptly towards the door, and waited there alone till Mrs. Denbigh and Miss Barclay were ready to follow her.

During their ride home, Mrs. Denbigh being fatigued, and Clarentine indignantly meditating upon what she had heard, Miss Barclay engrossed the conversation almost exclusively.

“ Well, I declare,” cried she, after they had proceeded some way, “ if an angel from Heaven had come down a few weeks ago and told me Mrs. Hertford could ever have behaved to me as she did this evening, could ever have married such a sneaking, mean, disagreeable looking wretch as that nasty little Mr. Lea, I should not have believed it! She used to take such pains to persuade me of her love for somebody else, used to talk so disinterestedly about it, make such fine parading professions of regard for me—and then, all at once, to accept such an object merely for his money ; look at me

as if she had never seen me before, and treat me with such pride and negligence! To be sure it's a good lesson—and if ever in future I trust quite so much to people that speak me so fair, I shall wonder!"

"I am amazed to hear you talk of her thus," cried Mrs. Denbigh; "I saw you sitting together and apparently conversing so amicably, that I concluded you were upon the best terms imaginable."

"No such thing, though I can assure you, she was cunning enough to get me to return to her every one of her letters before she went to Bath; and so as she has now lost all fear of me, and I never had any reason to fear her, we spoke out to one another pretty plainly! You may believe me or not as you will, but this I am sure of—she's a bad woman, and as artful and sly as a serpent!"

As neither Mrs. Denbigh nor Clarentine chose to undertake her defence, Miss Barclay, exulting in the persuasion that she had carried conviction to their minds, and been the first to stagger their good opinion of Mrs. Lea, went on in the same strain with such perfect self complacency till the carriage stopped, that short

as the ride had appeared to her whilst thus employed, she could scarcely believe the coachman had driven to the right house.

C H A P. XXIX.

THE following day, which was now the only one that remained previous to the most important one of Clarentine's life, Somerset, who spent the greatest part of it at Mr. Lenham's, being alone with her towards the evening, said—

“ My Clarentine, I have been reflecting with regret upon the difficulties, which, at the distance that separates us, will prevent our seeing your beloved Madame d'Arzele as often as I know you would wish: can we fix upon no plan that might surmount these obstacles? would it be impossible to induce her to chuse some habitation nearer to our own neighbourhood?”

“ Attached as she is,” answered Clarentine, “ to her present cheerful, yet quiet little mansion, I should think it almost
cruel,

cruel, great as would be the happiness I should derive from her society, to draw her from it, unless I knew of any other we could recommend as an equivalent for the one she would quit."

"I confess," resumed Somerset, "that at this moment I know of none such; but a very short time might enable me, with diligence and activity, to discover one the very counterpart of that she now resides in: at all events, we could with ease prevail upon her to spend a few months in town every year, by means of making a proportionate addition to the little income my generous Clarentine has hitherto spared her, and which, after this day, she will have invested me with the right of encreasing."

"Dear and noble Somerset!" cried Clarentine, holding out to him her hand, the tears starting into her eyes—"Who half so generous, so considerate as yourself! We will discuss this subject, however, just now, no further: I owe so much already to your disinterested liberality, that I cannot bear at present any additional weight of obligation. When Lord Welwyn comes to town, talk the matter

matter over with him; it is right that before we attempt to remove from him such a neighbour he should be consulted: if he approves your plan, we will then devise together the means of obtaining her sanction to it."

Somerfet, subscribing unhesitatingly to this decision, now started a different topic, and remained with her till a late hour, talking over a variety of plans relating to their future way of life.

In addition to Mrs. Denbigh, whose attendance Clarentine herself requested, she was accompanied to church the next morning, at that young lady's own pressing solicitation, by Miss Barclay. Mr. Manners gave her away, and the ceremony was performed by the worthy Mr. Lenham; after which, the travelling chaise that had waited for them at the door being ordered to draw up, Somerfet handed her into it, and instantly following her, they set out immediately for Northamptonshire.

On the ensuing Tuesday, without waiting for a summons, they returned to town, and, driving post, reached Clifford street before the close of day. Clarentine, without loss of time, dispatched a note to
Sophia

Sophia at Mrs. Germaine's, apprizing her of their arrival, and entreating to know when she could see her.

The servant brought her back the following answer :

MRS. SOMERSET.

“ Come to me, dearest creature, after breakfast to-morrow. A convenient head-ach will keep-me at home, and alone, the whole morning, as Mrs. Germaine is going about the town with Lady Julia and Harriet to shew fights, and Eltham has promised to be of their party. They know nothing of your return, for I chuse to have you entirely to myself the first three hours, and the expectation of seeing you might make them all take it into their heads to stay at home.

“ I write this in horrid haste ; just escaped from a drawing-room full of aunts and cousins, who have made my ears ring with congratulations till they have almost stunned me. Adieu, dear Clarentine,

“ S. E.”

Somerfet, to whom Clarentine, when she had read it, shewed this note, smiled as he gave it back into her hand, and said,

“ It

“ It is so evident, my love, your pretty friend wishes for no third person to be present on your first meeting, that I shall defer my visit to her till evening, and leave you to make your own at what hour suits you best in the morning. If I endeavour, however, when you return, to draw from you the secrets of so mysterious an interview, you must not be surprised: husbands, you know, are privileged to be curious, and the privacy of this appointment is such as to excite *my* curiosity very strongly.”

“ Are you aware,” said Clarentine, with equal gaiety, “ that by thus reminding me of your privileges you put me upon my guard, and teach me the necessity of being cautious? Whatever I may hear, I shall now come home so well prepared to dissemble, that all your interrogations will be useless.”

At one o'clock the next day the carriage came to the door, and Clarentine getting into it, was driven to the house of Mrs. Germaine, in Portland Place.

She was shewn up stairs on her arrival, and left an instant alone in a dressing-room, the door of which, however, was the
next

next moment thrown open, and Sophia, sparkling with joy and breathless with eagerness, flew into her arms. "Who shall detain me," cried she, "when such a friend as this is here? They are all below still, my Clarentine; but hearing your carriage stop, before the servant could announce you, I rushed from them, at the hazard of breaking my neck, to see and to embrace you. There—do you hear? Harriet is now shrieking after me! Begone, dear girl," added she, speaking from the landing place, "I told you before I could not go with you; I am engaged—I am busy."

Then hastily shutting the door, and fastening the bolt, she returned to Clarentine, and drew her towards a sofa, upon which she seated herself next her.

"Since you are thus unwilling, my dear Sophia," said Clarentine, apprehensively, "that our conference should be interrupted, I am very sorry I came so early. The carriage that brought me will infallibly betray us, for I gave no orders that it should drive off, and the party below must see it at the door."

"O no;

“ O no; I told one of the servants, as I ran through the hall, to dismiss it directly: besides, Eltham is gone out already, and he would have been the only one amongst them who could have known the livery.”

“ But why all these precautions, Sophia? Why so much secrecy? Have we any thing *very* important to discuss?”

“ Perhaps not; but I don’t chuse to make you popular till I have exhausted all my store of family anecdotes. I am my own mistress now, Clarentine, or the deuce is in it! and as long as I can, I am determined to save you the mortification of being presented to Mrs. Germaine. Oh, she is the most wearisome, insipid person, by whom the world was ever forfeited! A frolicking Mrs. Barclay in higher life, without half her vulgar originality, however, and consequently without any of her coarse entertainment! I am amazed how Lord Welwyn could fix upon such a woman to be the guide of Lady Julia. She will racket the poor girl into a consumption in less than a month, if she goes on as she has begun.”

“Have you, then, had time to go out much already?”

“O yes; we only arrived yesterday morning, and she dragged us, two hours afterwards, to a thousand different shops; made a large party for the evening of her’s and Eltham’s relations; proposed this pretty expedition for to-day; and takes us all out to dinner, and then to tea and cards, to-morrow.”

“Is this perturbed lady very young?”

“No; an emaciated, antique skeleton, worn out with dissipation and late hours!”

“Dearest girl, what a comfortless house for you to reside in! How long shall you be here?”

“O, as short a time as possible, be assured. Eltham has no great veneration for his amiable aunt any more than myself, and therefore I hope we shall get out of town by the latter end of May.”

“Alas! poor Sophia! Are you then to remain with her near three months?”

“Indeed I fear so; and, what is worse, in those three months she will have given me such a thorough distaste to London, that I fear I never shall be able to endure it again!”

“ Perhaps,” said Clarentine, smiling, “ there may be no harm in that: you had at one time formed such high expectations of it, that, had they been all realized, you might have become an absolute *Lady Townley*.”

“ It is by no means improbable,” returned Sophia—“ and therefore, if you will assist me with a few philosophical arguments, I will endeavour to reason myself into a belief that my being consigned to this odious old *flutterer* is a very fortunate circumstance.”

The subject was then changed, and Sophia, with her accustomed animation and good humour, was beginning to ask a thousand different questions which she scarcely gave Clarentine time to answer, when, hearing a quick step upon the stairs, she hastily said, with a look of vexation—

“ What now, I wonder? Will those creatures linger at home all day?”

As she spoke, some one from without attempting to turn the lock, but finding it fastened, called out in a voice which they instantly knew to be that of Eltham—

“ Sophia—will you not give me admittance?”

“ Yes;” answered she, moving towards the door—“ but who have you with you? Are the ladies gone?”

“ They are; and I am come to know why you did not accompany them: pray don’t keep me standing here.”

“ No, no—let him in for Heaven sake!” cried Clarentine, earnestly.

Sophia laughed, and, in a low voice, said—“ Will you be very civil to him if he comes in?”

“ Yes, certainly?”

“ And will you, Eltham,” resumed she, speaking louder, “ be very civil to my companion if I allow you to join us?”

“ Your companion?—Are you not alone, then?”

“ No; I have an exceeding pretty little *French milliner* shut up with me. Shall you like to see her?”

“ Yes, yes: pretty or not pretty, open the door before I lose all patience!”

Sophia did so; and Eltham hastily entered, saying, “ What ridiculous fabrication”—but starting at sight of Clarentine, he stopped short, and bowing to her with

an air of mingled gravity and surprise, "I beg your pardon, Madam," cried he, "I knew not that you were here."

"Nor did I intend," said Sophia, "you *should* know it; I had a great many things to talk over with her, and meant to have excluded all intruders the whole morning: since you *have* seen her, however, I insist upon it, Eltham, that you once for all throw aside those petrifying formal looks, and speak to her with the freedom and cheerfulness of an old acquaintance.—There, go and wish her joy on her marriage, and beg her to return the compliment."

Eltham, who could not forbear laughing, complied, however, with the best grace he was able, and taking Clarentine's hand, which he bowed upon as he spoke, paid his compliments to her in terms equally unaffected and well-bred.

"This is as it should be," cried Sophia, who, with looks of pleasure, had attended to the little ceremony. "You have acquitted yourself perfectly well, Eltham, and I now give you notice that whilst we are in town, this dear creature, as often as I can prevail upon her to let it
be

be so, is to make one in all our parties, and to live with us as much as it is in her power. It was highly necessary, therefore, you will allow, that all your four faces should disappear, and that, cordially and sincerely, you should shake hands, and determine to meet as friends. You know the old ballad, Eltham?

“ Tom loved Mary passing well,

“ But Mary she loved Harry.”

Remember, however, that in future you are to love no other Mary than me; though you are to be civil to them all. Ay, and to the Harrys, too?”

Then bringing to him his hat, which, on his entrance, he had thrown down upon a table, she put it into his hand, and gently pushing him towards the door, added—
“ Now make us one of your best bows, good friend, and don’t let me see you again till dinner.”

“ I will go, I think,” said Eltham, laughing, “ and pour my complaints into the sympathizing ears of Captain Somerset, from whom, since I presume he is no better treated than myself, I have not any doubt of obtaining the utmost commiseration.

tion. Shall I," continued he, addressing Clarentine, "have any chance of finding him at home this morning?"

"I left him there, Sir," answered she, "when I came out."

"Don't you mean, then," said Sophia, "to keep your appointment with Mrs. Germaine and Lady Julia?"

"No; your brother is gone with them, and therefore I reserve myself for some other occasion."

He then bade them good morning, and left the room.

Clarentine, who could not but applaud the part her rattling, but sensible little friend had acted, and who sincerely rejoiced in the certainty she now had of being henceforward always treated by Eltham with friendly unreserve, staid with her till the return of Mrs. Germaine and her young companions.

The delight with which she was met by Lady Julia was evident and flattering, and the warm attachment which had subsisted between them she saw with gratitude remained unaltered and undiminished. As for Harriet, incapable of experiencing any strong affection, she made no attempt
to

to evince greater pleasure than she felt, but accosted her with unmeaning kindness, and congratulated her with tranquil civility.

From this period to that of their leaving town, the day seldom passed in the course of which these long-trying and mutual friends did not meet. Somerset, as an additional gratification to his lovely bride, sought by every means in his power to draw Madame d'Arzele a few weeks from her solitude to join their happy circle, but his endeavours were vain; devoted to her children, and thankfully content with her peaceful residence, no solicitations could succeed in detaching her from either even for an hour, or in determining her to accept any increase to the annual hundred pounds she still continued to receive from the hand of her niece.

Of the Barclays, during the spring, Clarentine saw little. The mother, less ambitious of mixing with the cultivated and the elegant, than of keeping up her intercourse with the jolly associates of her accustomed amusements, made no efforts to force herself into their parties; and the daughter receiving from most of them a
reception

reception which might almost be termed repulsive, after the first two or three unsuccessful experiments, renounced the attempt, and resigned herself again to her former intimates.

With regard to Mrs. Denbigh, however, and Mr. Lenham, the case, it will be believed, was widely different. Revered and beloved, not only by Clarentine and Somerset themselves, but by every friend within the circle of their acquaintance, they were received with delight whenever they appeared, and visited with respect by all whom they would admit.

In the disappointment of the sole view which had induced her to form so precipitate an engagement, the interested and artificial Mrs. Lea found the punishment of her unprincipled conduct. Irritated by her neglect, and too well convinced of the fordid motives to which he owed her hand, her husband, concealing a will he had made in her favour soon after their marriage, drew up another, unknown to her, in which he left her a bare subsistence, and consigned the bulk of his fortune to a distant branch of his family. This change effected, he supported with
her

her a wretched existence about three years, and then by his death reducing her to the same state of indigence he had drawn her from, she was compelled, once again, to seek an asylum abroad, where neglected, soured and repining, she spent the remainder of her days.

Lady Delmington, in the prosperity, good conduct and happiness of her children, found the reward of all her maternal solicitude. Sir Edgar, restored to himself and to his friends, became the ornament and honour of his family, fulfilled all the hopes his early acquirements had promised ; and in his mild and interesting partner, found a companion whose faithful tenderness conciliated and secured all his own.

Playful yet affectionate, Sophia, by the excellence of her temper, and the sprightliness of her conversation, preserved the influence her good-humour and her frankness first gained her over Eltham's heart. Both thoughtless, but both generous and well-intentioned, their attachment was permanent and sincere, and their happiness seldom ruffled by any storm this attachment,

ment, and their mutual gaiety did not dissipate the next hour.

Of Clarentine and the long-chosen owner of her heart, blessed with domestic felicity and possessing minds that taught them how to prize it, nothing further can be added, than that their lives were as honourable as their names were respected.

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

Page 7, line 14, *after* flown, *add* from. Page 9, l. 21, *for* to, *r.* for. Page 75, l. 17, *for* servant, *r.* savant. Page 86, l. 7, *for* greatest, *r.* great. Page 106, l. 15, *after* suffer, *add* her. Page 114, last line but one, *after* like, *dele* a. Page 210, l. 7. *after* from, *r.* his. Page 243, l. 15, *for* her, *r.* here. Page 246, l. 3, *after* what, *add* was. Page 250, l. 13, *for* those, *r.* these. Page 252, l. 10, *for* herself, *r.* himself. Page 258, l. 18, *for* her, *r.* our. Page 272, l. 22, *for* concealing, *r.* cancelling.



